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‘IT’S OUR JOB TO TAKE THE LIMITS AWAY’: A CASE STUDY APPROACH TO EXPLORING A CULTURE OF TEACHER EXPECTATIONS IN AN ENGLISH SECONDARY SCHOOL

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Abstract

The concept of labelling and notions of fixed abilities are prevalent in our education system (Archer *et al*., 2018). From the earliest stages of formal education, teachers are required to make predictions about future development of the children based on present attainment, as well as determining students' academic ability (Dixon, 2002; Marks, 2013). Children from lower socio-economic groups and from particular minority ethnic groups are over-represented in lower sets and streams, and allocation to these groups does not always match the level of 'ability' as designated by test scores (Francis *et al*., 2017). As children progress through school, attainment gaps widen between children from lower socio-economic groups and their peers, suggesting that schooling exacerbates inequalities in educational attainment (Clifton and Cook, 2012).

This research explores the beliefs of 'high expectation teachers', and the practices through which teachers aim to build an inclusive learning environment in addition to the ways they develop strategies that do not rely on pre-determined ability labelling. What constitutes a 'high expectation' teacher is investigated from particular locations: through government policy; through theoretical models; through professional regulation and performance management, and through notions of professional identity. These positions sometimes overlap, but at times, also conflict with one another.

The case study design is based on the methodology described by Stake (2005). It is focussed on one phenomenon, that of the beliefs and practices of high expectation teachers, and one bounded case illustrates the phenomenon. The case is specific, and bounded by time and location. It is intended to emphasize uniqueness through the in-depth exploration of the participants' experiences. Within this bounded system are the relationships between people and events, and within those are differing perspectives, as the positions on what makes a 'high expectation' teacher are contradictory, and not universally agreed.

Following the use of thematic analysis to analyse data collected through questionnaires, interviews and focus groups, the phenomena of high teacher expectation remained only partially scrutinised in terms of social justice (Grenfell, 2014). Therefore, the social concerns raised throughout this study are also explored through the theories of Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984; 1990; 1993), with the aim

of making sense of the wider issues of inequality inherent in this study, particularly in the sense that habitus is helped by, and helps shape, pedagogical action (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002). Findings are that there needs to be a recognition that in education, socially advantaged interests and voices dominate in terms of social mobility agendas (Archer *et al*., 2018). Furthermore, teachers tend to be granted space in the public domain only through technical competency (Goodson, 2014). Findings suggest that teachers must be able to be emotionally committed to different aspects of their jobs, as their sense of moral responsibility is at the core of their professional identity (Nias, 1989).

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We shall not cease from exploration.

And at the end of our exploring,

Will be to arrive where we started,

And know the place for the first time.

T.S. Eliot *Four Quartets*

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Glossary of key terms and abbreviations

Academy: A state-funded school in England, directly funded by the Department for Education and independent of local authority control.

Attainment: Skills, competences and levels of performance.

DfE: Department for Education (2010 – present).

DfES: Department for Education and Skills (2001 - 2007).

Ebacc: English Baccalaureate. A school performance indicator linked to the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). It measures the percentage of students in a school who achieve 5+ 5-9 (formerly, A*-C) grades in 'traditional academic' GCSE subjects.

Effect size: The magnitude, or size, of an effect. Statistical significance (e.g., $p < .05$) tells us there was a difference between two groups or more based on some treatment or sorting variable.

GCSE: General Certificate of Secondary Education. An academic qualification, generally taken in a number of subjects by pupils in secondary education in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

High expectations: The ways in which teachers assimilate information about their students as they form their expectations about academic performance, attitudes and social development.

IQ: Intelligence quotient. A total score derived from several standardized tests designed to assess human 'intelligence'.

Labelling: To assign to a category, especially inaccurately or restrictively.

LEA: Local Education Authority. The local councils in England and Wales that are responsible for education within their jurisdiction.

MAT: Multi-academy trust. An academy trust that operates more than one academy.

Meritocracy: A society governed by people selected according to merit.

OECD: The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. An intergovernmental economic organisation with 36 member countries, founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade.

Ofsted: Office for Standards in Education. A government body set up in 1993 to inspect and assess the educational standards of schools and colleges in England and Wales.

Ofqual: The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation. A non-ministerial government body, which regulates qualifications, examinations and assessments in England.

Pupil Premium: A grant given by the government to schools in England, with the aim of decreasing the attainment gap for the most disadvantaged children.

PISA: The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment.

RCTs: Randomized Control Trial. A scientific experiment that aims to reduce certain sources of bias when testing the effectiveness of new treatments; this is accomplished by randomly allocating subjects to two or more groups, treating them differently, and then comparing them with respect to a measured response.

Russell Group: A self-selected association of twenty-four public research universities in the United Kingdom.

SEND: Special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Setting: Separating students according to academic ‘ability’, but more flexibly than streaming. It can involve smaller groups, with students being grouped into different attainment sets for different subject areas.

Social mobility: The movement of individuals, families, households, or other categories of people within or between social strata in a society.

Streaming: Separating students according to academic ‘ability’ across all (or a majority of) subjects.

White Paper: A government report giving information or proposals on an issue.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Positioned in the context of secondary state school education in England, this research aims to explore the beliefs and practices associated with high teacher expectations, summarised in chapter 2.7, through the voices of the teachers and students directly involved. I hope to offer greater insight into teaching beliefs and strategies that are perceived as creating a culture of high expectation and, additionally, to explore the barriers to creating such a culture. This chapter explores the rationale and aims of the research, the research context, my own biography and additionally, an exploration of my theoretical position.

The global research on teacher expectation, first studied by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968), has focused primarily on the occurrence of inaccurate teacher expectations in a range of classroom contexts, and their relationship with students' academic achievements, family background, motivation and engagement as well as teacher characteristics and beliefs (De Boer *et al*., 2019). Despite these studies establishing an association between teacher expectation and student learning, relatively little work has been done on teacher expectation interventions. One approach to addressing teacher expectation through interventions is to instruct teachers to exhibit behaviours associated with high-expectation teachers. The practices of high-expectation teachers, as defined by Rubie-Davies (2015), have been used in the most recent teacher expectation intervention studies: Rubie-Davies's (2015) intervention study focusses on the beliefs and practices of high-expectation teachers including student grouping, positive classroom climate and the instructional practices of questioning, goal setting and feedback.

Rubie-Davies's (2015) study is conducted in New Zealand at primary-school level; as far as the review of the literature suggests, the findings have not previously been applied at the secondary-school level nor in the UK. Therefore, as the beliefs and practices of high-expectation teachers as defined by Rubie-Davies (2015), and discussed further in chapter 2.1 have been used as a foundation for my own research, the findings of this study add to the accumulated knowledge of the phenomenon, thus contributing to the creation and interpretation of new knowledge (Bassey, 1999). To problematize Rubie-Davies (2015) definitions, what constitutes a 'high expectation' teacher will also be defined from particular locations:

government policy; theoretical models; professional regulation and performance management and notions of teacher identity.

1.1 Context to the study

Although Rubie-Davies (2015) explores the effects of teacher expectations on student achievement, this was not an aim of my own study. The average effect of teacher expectations on student performance has been found to be relatively small (Jussim and Harber, 2005), although students who are prior lower-attaining in terms of academic achievement and students from low-income families and minority groups seem to be more susceptible to the detrimental effects of low teacher expectations (De Boer *et al*., 2018).

Proving causation between teaching practices such as these and student achievement is problematic. Desforges (2015) suggests that the most direct route to improved standards in education is by improving the quality of teaching. Despite this, there is little evidence of the impact of teacher professional development on student outcomes. Robinson and Timplerley (2007) suggest that is possible to identify leadership dimensions that are critical in fostering teacher and student learning, including providing educational direction; ensuring strategic alignment; creating a community that learns how to improve student success; engaging in strategic problem addressal, and selecting and developing tools to solve problems.

Wiliam (2016) similarly suggests that we can improve the quality of teaching in one of two ways: by enhancing the quality of teaching or, less constructively, by replacement of less effective teaching staff. However, the assessment of teachers' effectiveness is complex as estimates of teacher effectiveness are imprecise. Sims and Wood (2018) summarise the consensus view of teacher improvement and professional development by elucidating that it is more likely to improve student attainment if it is sustained; collaborative; has teacher buy-in; is subject-specific; draws on external expertise, and is practice-based (Timperley *et al*., 2007; Wei *et al.*, 2009; Desimone, 2009; Walter and Briggs, 2012). The authors give the example of a meta-review (Cordingley *et al*., 2015) as providing a particularly clear statement of this view. Sims and Wood (2018) suggest, however, that this consensus view is flawed and likely to be misleading, proposing that professional development programmes are unlikely to lead to changes in teacher practice or impact positively on student attainment.

Higgins *et al.*, (2018) refute Sims and Wood's (2018) criticisms, referring to the systematic way in which their own (2015) literature review was conducted. The authors summarise the key criticisms of their literature review as the exclusion of randomised controlled trials (RCT). As discussed further in chapter 3.5, RCTs are rare in education and controversial in their usage (Higgins *et al*., 2018), as they are an attempt to emulate the perceived scientific rigour and neutrality of laboratory science in other fields. However, in educational research, this raises multiple problems, including ensuring 'double blinding' during trails and the fact that in educational research, there is no parallel to a placebo (Wrigley, 2018). Furthermore, Lingenfelter (2016) reminds us that in evaluations of teaching, qualitative methods may be preferable as they enable us to follow the perspectives and observations of multiple participants and observers.

Consequently, this research aims to explore teachers and students' views of the beliefs and practices of high-expectation teachers, and does not aim to implement interventions to change teacher behaviour nor to measure the impact of these interventions on student achievement. Instead, I hope to offer greater insight into teaching beliefs and strategies that are perceived as creating a culture of high expectation and, additionally, to explore the barriers to creating a culture of high expectation.

1.2 My position in the research

I have taught in state schools at the secondary level since qualifying as a teacher in 1996. I was also educated in a state school, after which I gained my first degree from a Russell Group university before beginning my teacher training. Throughout my own childhood, I was taught to understand and value the importance of education. My father left school and his home at 15, following a difficult childhood. He returned to education while serving in the Royal Air Force, which eventually led to a highly successful career in the manufacturing industry. A subsequent career in secondary school teaching followed after a change in the direction of his career later in his life. My father still tutors students in his retirement, although he is now in his mid-70s. He refuses payment for tutoring, as he believes that free access to education should be a right for all children. My mother left school at 16. Following her initial career as a laboratory assistant, she also returned to education when my

sister and I were at primary school, using her experience as a playgroup leader to begin her journey to qualifying as a primary school teacher.

Therefore, my formative years were influenced by the values I saw my parents not only espousing but also embodying as they fulfilled their own professional ambitions. In my family, education is a vehicle for professional advancement and academic fulfilment. Encouraged by my family to attend a Russell Group university, I did not consider my state school background to be a barrier to access; I am unsure if this is because of 'self-certainty' of my middle-class habitus (Bourdieu, 1984). I certainly did not worry about 'fitting-in' and thrived in the context, noticing only imperceptibly that the majority of my peers had been educated privately or by the grammar school system.

Following my own, perhaps inevitable, decision to become qualified as a teacher, I taught full-time as a secondary school teacher of English in the state education sector until the birth of my son in 2004, when I returned to work in a part-time role. My daughter was born in 2007. When she began primary school, I felt ready for a new challenge and returned to my educational journey to complete a Master's degree in Education.

This decision consolidated my belief in the transformative nature of education, as my second degree coincided with a turbulent period in the history of my workplace. The school had been placed in 'special measures' following 'unsatisfactory' exam results and a subsequent Ofsted inspection in 2013. Before 1992, schools were inspected by Local Education Authority (LEA) employed inspectors. As part of the centralisation of the school system that had begun with the 1988 Education Reform Act, Ofsted was established as an independent, non-ministerial government department reporting directly to Parliament, with the responsibility of inspecting and regulating education. The impetus to form Ofsted may have also risen from an ideological perception that LEA employed inspectors were inconsistent in terms of standards and not always willing to conform to the agenda of the Conservative government (O'Leary, 2014). Each Ofsted inspection must now follow a specific framework to measure particular aspects of the schools' work and, from January 2012, to focus on those that have the greatest impact on raising achievement (Ofsted, 2012).

As part of this new framework, schools were graded as ‘Outstanding’, ‘Good’, ‘Requires Improvement’ or ‘Inadequate’. With an inadequate ranking, schools could have serious weaknesses or require special measures. The differences in these rankings are high stakes as they impact on the frequency, and extent, of subsequent inspections, in addition to their contribution to the school's standing in the eyes of the local community, as well as to staff morale, staff retention and recruitment (Crozier *et al.*, 2011; O’Leary, 2014).

My Master’s dissertation, examining the impact of different models of lesson evaluation, helped me to contextualise the labelling of the school as being in ‘special measures’, as well as to helping me to evaluate it academically, alleviating some of the professional trauma that was created as a consequence of the Ofsted judgement through my understanding of it as part of a wider political climate. Hopkins (2008) asserts that we live in an educational system that tends to limit individual initiative by encouraging conformity and control and suggests that undertaking research is one way that teachers can take increased responsibility for their actions. Additionally, Stenhouse (1975) describes the ideal role of teachers as necessarily autonomous in professional judgement, believing that it is the task of all educationalists outside the classroom to serve teachers, for only teachers are in the position to create good teaching. Therefore, for Stenhouse (1975), the issue of power is also paramount, perceiving the link between research and the art of teaching as a method of returning teachers’ self-worth.

My professional interest in my current research topic began at this time, following the end of my Master’s degree. My role in the school was that of a middle leader, as part of the English department’s leadership team. One potentially damaging practice driven by Ofsted’s performance requirements was the decision taken by my school’s previous senior leadership team to introduce a ‘three-part lesson plan’ in preparation for a forthcoming Ofsted inspection. The inspection was ‘high stakes.’ Since the school had been deemed to be in ‘special measures,’ the consequences of failing the inspection were severe (Perryman, 2009).

The aim of the lesson plan, introduced to teaching staff during a compulsory lunchtime training session, was to prove to inspectors that teachers were differentiating their lesson materials. Prior to teaching a lesson, teachers were instructed to consider the concepts or skills to be studied by groups of learners in

their classrooms. Those students were labelled as low ability, middle ability and high ability. To me, this felt troubling, and I questioned the performativity agenda underlying this action, which felt as if it were merely masquerading as a display of quality (Ball, 2003). I was angry at several aspects of this practice as my values were challenged: I felt that this action rendered students invisible and mute through the instrumentalism of rational school improvement (Rogers and Gunter, 2012). Following an intense period of internal and external scrutiny, the school was later removed from special measures, being classified as 'Good' fourteen months later. But for me, questions remained: who are teachers to decide what a child is capable of before they even enter the classroom? What does the term 'ability' mean? I felt compelled to return to these questions when I began studying for my doctorate in 2015.

The high-stakes Ofsted inspection and subsequent strike action over excessive teacher workload led to a change in the majority of the school's senior leadership team. This brought with it new professional opportunities, and a recognition of the potential of adopting the structure of lesson study that I had studied as part of my Master's degree for classroom observation as a school-wide policy, following several years of trials to ensure the model was suitable for the school's context. After my appointment to a position of school-wide responsibility for teaching and learning, continuing professional development (CPD) in my workplace uses lesson study as a vehicle for teacher development, with the aim of embracing teacher professionalism and a culture of collaboration rather than the competition that neoliberal trends encourage.

1.3 Research context

In terms of the history of the school in the study, the institution is the product of shifts towards comprehensive schooling, encouraged by the Circular 10/65 policy document and then reinforced through financial pressures in Circular 10/66. This shift was introduced by the Labour government in 1965 and 1966 respectively (Department for Education and Science, 1965). Secondary education in the area had previously been focused on a mixed grammar school for those students who passed the 11+ examination, and on single-sex secondary modern schools for those who did not. Thus, two comprehensive schools were proposed, one inheriting

the site of the mixed grammar school and one entirely new school, which would first occupy the buildings of the former girls' school, prior to a new site becoming available for the 1976-7 school year.

The new site gave an impetus to the school's development, as it was based in the heart of its community. This was a time of celebration for those members of the local community who had campaigned for their own neighbourhood school, as children had previously had to undertake approximately a ten mile journey to attend secondary school. In addition to having the support of the community and the county council in the concept and planning of the school, the district council chose to build a sports and leisure centre which was jointly managed by the district council and the school. This was accompanied by a programme of adult education courses which were revived when maths and computing specialist school status was achieved in 2003, and still continues to offer the school's resources to the local community.

The character and identity of the school has also been shaped by the presence of a sixth form. At this time, there was pressure from the LEA on economic and efficiency grounds to end all post-16 provision in schools. The matter was only resolved in the late 1990s and early 2000s with the recognition that the school needed to expand significantly the number of pupils entering at age 11, who would eventually feed through to the sixth form. This meant attracting even more parents from outside the catchment area to send their children to the school. Student numbers doubled to around 1200 in the decade to 2005 with the size of the sixth form almost quadrupling, resulting in the next few years seeing a building programme to accommodate the greater numbers of students attending.

The school worked with the LEA to help pioneer some aspects of the Local Management of Schools project in the late 1980s, a feature of the Education Reform Act (1988), and contentious in its erosion of the power of LEAs, designed ostensibly to give more freedom to schools to use their funding in the way they wished. In 1993, the school gained Grant Maintained status which brought more of the school's funding directly to the school from central government. When the new Coalition government of 2010 opened the academisation programme to all schools, the school received an independent academy status, without joining an academy trust. At the time this research was undertaken, the school in this study has fought to retain its status as a non-selective, stand-alone academy, with mixed gender

entry from ages 11–18. Of approximately 1200 students, 7.4% are eligible for free school meals. The majority of students are of White British heritage: 60% of students attending the school identify as working-class, while the remaining 40% identify as middle-class.

The school's catchment area remains predominately rural and semi-rural. The local town population numbers approximately 13,000, and is served by one other comprehensive school, which due to its location is maintained by a different LEA. Pre-1945, employment in the local area was dominated by mining. A decline in the industry has led to significant numbers of the local population seeking employment in nearby cities. Those remaining in the area for employment are most likely to be employed in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors, while 3.3% of the local population are unemployed. At post-16, approximately 70% of students take up university places, with 10% of students attending Russell Group universities. The remaining number of students take up apprenticeships or progress to employment.

In terms of the wider political and economic context, the students in this study are living in challenging times. Alston (2018) comments that although the UK is the world's fifth largest economy and contains many areas of immense wealth, many people are living in poverty. Specifically, this amounts to 14 million people, a fifth of the UK's population. Four million people are more than 50% below the poverty line (Social Metrics Commission, 2018). 1.5 million people are unable to afford basic essentials (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2018). Child poverty is predicted to rise 7% between 2015 and 2022, possibly to as high as 40% (Hood and Waters, 2017). As I will explore during this thesis, this wider political and economic context can be seen to be contributing to the barriers to creating a culture of high expectations.

1.4 Developing the theoretical framework

My concern with basing teaching activities on pre-determined ability labelling initially led me to the work of Hart *et al*., (2004) who define ability labels more broadly. Hart *et al.*, (2004) suggest that ability labels should be used simply to compare attainments or performances on a range of measures. The authors advocate that this performance view allows for a more complex appraisal of individuals' abilities. In line with my own thinking, the authors reject the fallacy of fixed ability for a more optimistic view of human educability, which is responsive to the natural propensity of human beings to learn and change over time (Hart *et al*., 2004).

The clarification of my position in terms of a rejection of the notion of fixed ability as a fallacy led me to focus on teachers' constructions of learners, as teachers may form fixed expectations for individual students and, indeed, for whole classes, through an over-reliance on pre-determined ability labelling (Hart *et al.*, 2004). When the lack of student success is explained by a lack of ability on behalf of the student, a teacher is more likely to cease in their attempts to encourage the student to succeed (Rubie-Davies, 2015). In contrast, when teachers believe that all students can learn, teachers are more likely to produce learning gains from their students (Dweck, 2006).

I am driven by social justice and by my belief in human educability in contrast with the predictability of ability labelling. That is, I hold the anti-determinist view that every child has an ability to learn. The social concerns raised throughout this study also led me to explore the theories of Bourdieu, with the aim of making sense of the wider issues of inequality inherent in this study. This lens has been helpful in trying to make sense of the wider issues of inequality, particularly in the sense that habitus is helped by, and helps shape, pedagogical action. Through the lens of Bourdieu's theories, we can see why education tends to reproduce social division. As in any field, education is comprised of objective relations and structures, and these are complex and dynamic. Home and family also play a significant role in social reproduction and has consequences for the success of the student (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002).

1.5 Social mobility?

When designing this research, I believed that exploring the beliefs and practices of high-expectation teachers as defined by Rubie-Davies (2015) could lead to possible ways of building a more inclusive learning environment. Education is supposed by some to have a transformative potential that can overcome social background, disadvantage and injustice, and school experiences can be seen as operating outside the structures and interactions involved in social reproduction (Hoskins and Barker, 2019).

Upon reflection, as my research progressed, I have come to believe that the definition of educational research as problem-solving is of limited use. Biesta *et al*., (2019) suggest that there is an ongoing need for educational research to identify problems and, in that sense, to create them. Teachers and students in this study are clear that there are barriers to teaching and learning that hinder the creation of a

culture of high expectation. This research tries to expose hidden assumptions, and aims to engage in a conversation about what is worthwhile and important in both education and society more broadly (Biesta *et al*., 2019).

The role of my own family history and context seems significant here. Some parents believe that their children should have to compete for resources in local comprehensive schools; they are committed to state education, but also have the requisite knowledge and capitals, or accumulated labour in its embodied form (Bourdieu, 1986) to mitigate the perceived threat to educational attainment in sending their children to the local comprehensive school (Reay *et al.,* 2011). This resonates with my own personal experience. However, in a class-ridden society, to be middle-class is to be a person of value; someone whose value judgements carry symbolic power (Reay *et al.,* 2011). Middle-class parents have a sense of 'entitlement': they are secure in their sense of self, believing in their own powers of social reproduction, ensuring their children are suitably placed and positioned in order to access what is 'rightfully' theirs (Crozier *et al.,* 2011).

In terms of my research focus, the notion of the transformative potential of education is complex. As De Boer *et al.*, (2018) suggest, biased teacher expectations seem to be the product of student characteristics, including socio-economic status. This deficit model is reflected in policy as successive governments in the UK have adopted policies designed to promote and advance intragenerational and intergenerational social mobility (Cabinet Office 2009, 2011; Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, 2010). Policy texts encourage the view that young people should have high aspirations, assuming that the relatively low progression rates into further and higher education are due to a poverty of aspiration among disadvantaged young people (Archer *et al.*, 2007). Despite this political focus, and despite significant expenditure, there is little sign that low-income groups are making progress relative to their peers (Hoskins and Barker, 2019).

Friedman and Savage (2017) refer to social mobility as a chimera, as our current version of meritocracy has failed to create impact on class inequalities. In fact, it may have exacerbated them. When there is a highly competitive education system, those who can maximise their advantages are best placed to succeed (Friedman and Savage, 2017). This thesis is underpinned by the concept that the current policy of social mobility as fairness (Payne, 2012) results in a deficit model of

working-class achievement (Brown, 2013). The concept of social mobility also dismisses the effects of structural inequality, as individual failure is constructed as a fair outcome of a meritocratic education system (Hoskins and Barker, 2016).

Within neoliberal theory, the concept of social mobility as fairness involves giving those from disadvantaged backgrounds an opportunity to compete with those from more privileged backgrounds (Peters, 2011). Policy focus is currently on lifting aspirations for those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, rather than addressing inequalities in life-chances (Payne, 2012; Harrison and Waller, 2018). However, individual achievements are not judged in isolation: policy debate becomes reduced to what working-class students and families lack, assuming that by giving them more of what the middle-class already have this deficit can be reduced (Brown, 2013). This is exemplified most recently in the latest Ofsted framework which references cultural capital, and charges schools with ensuring students are given the knowledge they need to "succeed in life" (Ofsted, 2019, p.9).

Brown (2013) posits that there needs to be greater political commitment in order to confront longstanding questions of distributional justice and social inequalities in life-chances. Underlying structures, such as those related to status hierarchies, family networks, social background and relative poverty appear to have a greater impact on health, opportunity and life chances than any reforms designed to encourage social mobility (Hoskins and Barker, 2019).

1.6 Structure of thesis

My thesis is organised into six chapters, each aiming to explore and discuss a specific aspect of the research process. This initial chapter, the introduction, aims to present the context within which the research is situated. Chapter 2 aims to summarise the past and current state of information on the topic of teacher expectation, and its role in perpetuating the inequalities in the educational system, and will explore a brief history of teacher expectation research, in addition to the beliefs and practices of high- and low-expectation teachers as defined by Rubie-Davies (2015). I will also aim to explore the complexities of creating a culture of high expectation, including definitions of high expectation from differing locations. Chapter 3 offers a rationale for my methodological approach to the analysis of the data collected from teachers and students in this study. The subsequent analysis of

the data using thematic analysis constitutes chapter 4. In chapter 5, the data is discussed through a Bourdieusian lens. Chapter 6 provides the conclusion of the research and makes further recommendations, including implications for professional practice, and how the research process has impacted on me personally and professionally.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 The research problem and consequent research focus

In the last chapter, I outlined the context within which the research is situated, including my own position in the research and how I began to develop my theoretical framework. In this chapter, the literature review, I aim to summarise the past and current state of information (Cresswell, 2002) surrounding the topic of teacher expectation, and its role in perpetuating the inequalities in the educational system. Within it, I aim to: understand the substantive content, ideas and arguments in the literature; use the literature to support and counter my argument, and to use the same approach as other authors as a stepping stone to somewhere new (Harris, 2017). The literature review supports my formulation of the research questions, but these were also based on my experiential knowledge and my value base, hence I will also outline personal and professional reasons for selecting the phenomenon of teacher expectation as my research focus. Throughout this chapter, I will frame relevant aspects of the research literature in terms of the most influential or recent to enable me to position my research within its context. The literature is explored around what constitutes a 'high expectation' teacher from particular locations: government policy; theoretical models; professional regulation and performance management and notions of identity. These positions sometimes overlap, but at times, also conflict with one another.

The concept of labelling and notions of fixed abilities are prevalent in our education system (Archer *et al*., 2018). From the earliest stages of formal education, teachers are required to make predictions about future development in children based on present attainment, as well as determining students' academic ability (Dixon, 2002, Marks, 2013). Children from lower socio-economic groups and from particular minority ethnic groups are over-represented in lower sets and streams, and allocation to these groups does not always match 'ability' as designated by test scores (Francis *et al.*, 2017). As children progress through school, socio-economic gaps widen, suggesting schooling exacerbates the inequalities in educational attainment (Clifton and Cook, 2012).

In terms of theoretical models of what constitutes a 'high expectation' teacher, the work of Rubie-Davies (2015) has been of particular interest to me in terms of its exploration of what high expectation teachers think and do, and how these practices

differ from what other teachers think and do, with the aim of creating a culture of high expectation. Leong *et al.*, (2012) advise that extending an established effect in this way may be a more appropriate approach to educational research for novice researchers.

Rubie-Davies (2015) defines teacher expectations as the notions that all teachers hold about the current and future academic performance and classroom behaviour of their students, based on their interpretation of information about them, such as prior achievement. The author's own interest in teacher expectation began when she was teaching in a school in New Zealand whose population consisted of one-third Maori students, yet she felt that the Maori culture and language had been ignored by the school. She began a Maori culture group, with the aim of maximising students' academic gains. At the end of the academic year, students from the culture group won every academic and sporting prize awarded by the school, and years later, many students went on to achieve academic and professional success (Rubie-Davies, 2015).

Following the creation of the culture group, and with the aim of identifying the beliefs and practices of high expectation teachers, Rubie-Davies interviewed teachers and conducted classroom observations to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' instructional practices and pedagogical beliefs (Rubie-Davies 2007, 2008). The findings of these studies formed the basis of a three-year intervention study. During the first year, teachers attended a series of four day-long workshops, focussed on particular themes, including a background to the teacher expectation field, promoting a positive class climate, student grouping, and goal setting. Teachers worked collaboratively to plan how to introduce these practices into their classrooms, ensuring they had ownership over the process. Teachers then shared their findings at the end of the process. The second year of the project consisted of teachers in a control group being given a 'Good Practice' booklet, compromised of ideas collected from the intervention teachers in the first year of the project. At the end of the third year, the aim of the study was to find out if intervention and control group teachers maintained new practices

The study found mixed effects. The intervention group's students had higher maths gains than the control group's students, but not higher reading gains as teachers had implemented the intervention to a higher degree in maths lessons rather than reading lessons. Teachers suggested that this was because they found the maths interventions easier to implement (Rubie-Davies, 2015). It could therefore be

suggested that a weakness of the study is that not enough support was provided for teachers in terms of implementing the planned interventions.

De Boer *et al.*,*'s* (2018) review of the teacher expectation research literature also suggests it is important to address teacher expectation in educational practice, and that this should be approached through interventions designed to address teacher expectation. The authors propose this can be achieved through teachers applying the behaviours of high expectation teachers, or through making teachers aware of the effects of teacher expectations on students, or by addressing the beliefs of teachers that lead to biased expectations. The authors do critique the work of teacher expectation intervention studies that artificially manipulate teacher expectations, suggesting that only teacher expectation studies that have been executed in a naturalistic setting can provide insights into ways to sustainably increase teacher expectations (De Boer *et al*., 2018).

The beliefs and practices of high-expectation teachers as defined by Rubie-Davies (2015) will be explored further in this chapter, as similarly to my own values, the author believes education can have a transformative potential. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) suggest that part of the importance of the function of a literature review is to ascertain whether the research is original, significant, important, complex, difficult or topical. Therefore, I also intend to explore the complexities of creating a culture of high expectation, particularly in terms of the phenomenon's wider social and political context, and in addition, through what constitutes a high expectation teacher from particular locations

2.2 The complexities of creating a culture of high expectations for all: the impact of socioeconomic factors

Although exploring the beliefs and practices of high expectation teachers (Rubie-Davies, 2015), has been of particular interest to me in terms of my professional learning, there are many difficulties presented in creating a culture of high expectation. Educational attainment in England is highly stratified by social class, and more so than in other countries (PISA, 2012). A close correlation exists between socioeconomic background and educational attainment, with those from the lowest socioeconomic backgrounds achieving lowest in terms of educational attainment (Clifton and Cook, 2012; Jerrim and MacMillian, 2014). Children from low socioeconomic backgrounds tend to be 'behind' middle-class children even when

starting school, suggesting a strong impact of social factors external to education in reproducing educational inequality (Waldfogel and Washbrook, 2010), and these socioeconomic attainment gaps widen, rather than narrow, as children progress through school (Clifton and Cook, 2012), suggesting that schooling exacerbates inequalities in attainment outcomes. This socioeconomic gap in terms of educational attainment has led to government attention on issues of equality of opportunity, social justice and social mobility (Francis *et al*., 2017).

This inequality is exacerbated by the neoliberal assumption within our educational system that choice, competition and markets will lead to efficient and effective schools. However, these forces may create even more inequalities than previously existed (Apple, 2013). These neoliberal values are contradictory to those of the post-war welfare state, which was established to ensure that basic citizenship rights were removed from the insecurities of market forces. Apple (2004) suggests that middle-class parents have become skilled in exploiting market mechanisms in education and in bringing their social, economic and cultural capital to bear in them. In addition, middle-class parents can also afford to provide hidden cultural resources such as extra-curricular classes: affluent parents are more likely to be able to decode and use marketised forms to their own benefit. The concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) is a pivotal one in terms of my understanding of the phenomenon of teacher expectation, and will be explored further in chapter 5.1.

In economic terms, this can also be seen as part of the ‘welfare to work’ discourse. Brine (2011) reminds us that during the 2010 election campaign, all three major parties in England spoke in threatening terms of deep economic cuts and hard times to come. Against this economic backdrop, the concept of the deserving and undeserving poor has become more prevalent, as has the pathologisation of the undeserving recipient of state benefits: one ‘solution’ presented by politicians is to adequately equip our young people for the future they will face, to help them avoid becoming part of the contemporary discourse of ‘benefit cheats’. The aim is to avoid social exclusion and instead “interrupt the experience of deficit and disadvantage” (Ball, 1997, p.153).

As Apple (2004) explains, school systems are driven by the assumption that putting in place higher standards will somehow solve deep-seated educational and social problems. The state, therefore, shifts the blame from itself onto individual schools, parents, and children. Policy entails a shift in responsibility for social problems from

the state to individuals. However, in a market-driven, school-led system, the privileged will always be protected (Wright, 2012).

Social class has been shown to have significant effects on educational outcomes and life chances (Demie and Lewis, 2011). Working-class students are less likely to achieve the same GCSE grades as their middle-class peers, less likely to go on to higher education and less likely to attend a popular and successful school (Sutton Trust, 2005; Brown, 2013). Demie and Lewis (2011) find that this underachievement can be connected to low parental aspiration, low-literacy levels, feelings of marginalisation within the community, a low level of parental education and the lack of support necessary to break the cycle of poverty and disadvantage. The authors suggest the main contributor to this underachievement is the government's failure to recognise that some groups in society have particular needs that are not being met.

Specifically, white working-class boys continue to be one of the lowest attaining groups in the UK qualification system. Consequently, aspiration remains a key focus in educational policy for this particular group; and within this narrative, working-class families are often blamed for their 'failure' to act responsibly with regard to their education (Harrison and Waller, 2018). However, for working-class students in education, embracing 'success' as defined by middle-class aspirations requires difficult identity negotiations; for many working-class boys, the losses inherent in this shift may be larger than the gains (Reay, 2002). Dermott and Pomati (2016) remind us that dominant ideas of good parenting are largely derived from middle-class perspectives, and critiques of 'poor' parenting can swiftly become criticism of working-class families. This reference to cultural deficits deems the underachievement of the poor to be the fault of individuals, families and communities (Gordon, 2011).

Dermott and Pomati (2016) suggest that poverty has an impact on material resources, and parents may not, for instance, have books and sporting equipment available at home. Parents with higher levels of educational attainment may be better placed to engage in educational activities with their children, and some parents may find it challenging to engage in dialogue with their children's teachers (Reay, 2006). The pressures of paid work and unpaid household chores may mean parents do not have enough time to engage in a full range of parenting activities. Dermott and Pomati (2016) contend, therefore, that it could be construed that associations between low levels of education, poverty and poor parenting are ideologically driven.

Furthermore, Daley (2018) notes that white working-class boys, whose voices contribute to my own study, are often positioned as the victims of the education system and that the focus, particularly in the popular media, tends to be on 'race' rather than the British class system as a whole. The author suggests that although white working-class boys have been neglected at every stage of British society, demographics from black and ethnic minority groups within the working-class are notably lacking in support for similar issues.

2.3 Policy definitions of high expectations

i) Government attempts to create a meritocracy through curriculum, exemplified through the (2016a) White Paper 'Educational Excellence Everywhere'

In terms of teacher expectations, it is important to explore policy definitions of high expectations, as students' learning experiences are directly impacted on by the consequences of educational policy. Harris *et al.*, (2019) posit that for many countries, the curriculum is seen as the means by which to raise educational standards to meet the perceived needs of a knowledge economy (Ball, 2017). Policy focus has shifted to focus on young people's access to particular areas of the curriculum, with performance measures acting as a lever in determining who gets access to which aspects of the curriculum (Harris *et al.*, 2019).

Chilton and Schaffner (2011) claim that the increased mediation of political messages in the twenty-first century, and our increased exposure to them, has important implications, including the need for awareness and critical evaluation. Furthermore, Woods (2006) suggests that it is frequently unclear where to draw the line between the discourses of politics, media and advertising. This stage-managed approach to political discourse is exacerbated by the employment of unelected policy-making advisers and consultants. As politics has as its central aim the acquisition and retention of power, and the authority to control the accumulation and distribution of a society's economic wealth, the linguistic devices the political world employs can have far-reaching effects (Woods, 2006). Concerns such as these give us moral and ethical reasons for analysing political discourse.

Government definitions of the meaning of the term 'high expectations' differ from definitions elaborated in the research literature. The aim of the DfE's (2016b)

strategy overview from 2015–2020 is “to provide world-class education and care that allows every child and young person to reach his or her potential, regardless of background” (p.3). The problem being presented here is the need to create a ‘world-class’ education in concurrence with the social democratic discourse that “every child and young person should reach his or her potential, regardless of background” (DfE, 2016b, p.3). The title of the chapter, ‘High expectation and a world-leading curriculum for all’ presents expectations as inextricably linked with the curriculum. The reception of the government’s interpretation of education is the only possible pathway to “success” (DfE, 2016a, p.88).

This vision of the curriculum owes much to the work of Hirsch. The Minister for School Standards, Gibb, explains that Hirsch’s (1999) work provides a “compelling social justice case with which to argue for a knowledge-rich curriculum” (Gibb, 2015, p.14). Hirsch (1999) argues that the goal of building knowledge and developing cultural capital is to achieve social justice. However, it is important to consider who decides what knowledge matters and whether cultural literacy can be objectively identified. We could hypothesise that a body of knowledge can never truly be value free.

My own values would align more closely with Apple’s (2004), who interprets Hirsch’s work as a condemnation of progressivism, which is seen as being in the dominant position in educational policy and practice and is portrayed as having destroyed a valued past. Hirsch’s view implies that it is only by tightening control over curriculum and teaching, and by making education more disciplined and competitive, that we can have effective schools. The notion of cultural capital, and how some forms are valued over others (Bourdieu, 1986), will be explored in chapter 5 of this thesis, alongside my challenge to the assumption that some students are culturally disadvantaged, as cultural capital is seen through the lens of a middle-class ‘norm’.

Metaphors of growth, development, caring, tending and nurturing are absent in this discourse of corporate culture. Kelly (1999) suggests that the values of competition, productivity, instrumentalism and value for money implicit in the commercial metaphor now dominates the teaching profession, and the values of caring, human development and intrinsic value have been replaced, despite the fact that it is these values that are more appropriate to education in a democratic society.

Apple (2013) refers to the neoliberal assumption that choice, competition and markets will lead to efficient and effective schools but warns us that these forces many create even more inequalities than previously existed. These values counter those of the post-war welfare state, which was established to ensure that basic citizenship rights were removed from the insecurities of market forces. Hence, the reference to academies as using their "freedoms to innovate and build more stretching and tailored curricula" (DfE, 2016a, p.90) can be seen as the creation of a socially divisive system in which class privilege will be imposed by market forces. Furthermore, Ball (2008) reminds us there are profits to be made from the privatisation of education: the phrase "we are working with the publishing industry…and others" (DfE, 2016, p.90) refers to private contracts providing public services.

Additionally, the chapter outlines the need to adopt the "mastery" approach of the Far East, possibly as Shanghai has been lauded as an educational success story following the findings of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2012). The importance of context may be underestimated by politicians here; Ball (1997) warns us that the "flow and influence of policies between nations needs to be addressed with care" (Ball, 1997, p.267). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Education Policy Outlook report (2015) advises policymakers to keep the context of education systems in mind in order to implement policy effectively, although Ball (1997) refers to the think-tank OECD as "crude and lumbering…bulldozing over human dignity without pause for thought" (Ball, 1997, p.33). The increasingly complex and significant global influences evident here are embedded in national systems of educational policy-making. Policies are formed and developed in relation to international competition, which in turn changes the meaning of education and what it means to be educated.

The Ofsted inspection framework (2019) revisits many of these ideas. The document suggests that an ambitious curriculum is a matter of social justice and equity, as disadvantaged students may not "have access to the corpus of knowledge that should be the entitlement of every child", claiming that "if we want to reduce economic and social inequality, a good place to start is the curriculum" (Ofsted, 2019, p.9). Ofsted's interpretation of cultural capital is that students should be introduced to "the best that has been thought and said". This quotation refers to the title of Arnold's (1869) essay "The best that has been thought and written". In his collection of essays 'Culture and Anarchy', Arnold proposes that "study of the best

which has been thought and said in the world" is the "best hope for our present difficulties" (Arnold, 1869, Preface). This reference to the Victorian cultural agenda could be a further example of neoconservative trends evident in government policy, which have now become embedded in the latest inspection framework.

ii) Government attempts to create a meritocracy through examination reform

The qualification system in England has undergone considerable change over the last few years, accompanied by significant curriculum and policy changes. These changes were made in response to perceived issues with previous assessment systems. The GCSE, taken by sixteen-year-olds in England, was first taken in 1988 and is a high-stakes qualification for both students and their schools. The DfE is responsible for setting the curriculum and for the qualifications included in performance tables, while The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) is responsible for assessment objectives in each GCSE subject, in addition to regulating the assessments and qualifications developed by various awarding organisations (Ingram *et al*., 2018). The DfE oversees this process.

Accountability measures in education, such as the publishing of performance tables, introduced in 1992 with the aim of making schools accountable to stakeholders, can lead to unintended consequences. For example, one key measure reported was the percentage of 16-year-old pupils achieving five or more good passes where a good pass was defined as a grade of C or above (A*–C). This led to the focusing of schools' efforts on the C/D grade borderline.

Until recently, schools could also enter their students for exams before they reached the age of sixteen. An increase in early exam entry may have been partly due to national tests being abolished for fourteen-year-olds in 2009, but early exam entry also meant that students could undertake a qualification in a different subject, thereby positively impacting on school performance in league tables. Schools could also redirect curriculum time tor students towards subjects where they were not yet achieving a good pass, and to re-sit individual examinations when they didn't score especially well. Early entry, however, is often associated with lower grades (Ofsted, 2013) and an increase in the number of re-sits needed to achieve a good passing grade (Noyes *et al.*, 2010).

As a consequence of these type of behaviours, in 2012, the national regulator, Ofqual, announced that all two-year GCSE courses had to be taken linearly, which

meant that students had to take assessments for all units at the end of their two-year courses (also referred to as 100% terminal assessment). Prior to this, some GCSEs permitted a modular form of assessment, allowing students to take different units at different times of the year. Vitello and Crawford (2018) report that a linear system of assessment may increase the likelihood that students are entered into foundation-tier GCSEs, potentially capping achievement by disallowing students to access grades higher than a grade 5, equivalent to a grade C. Furthermore, after controlling for prior attainment, students with a higher level of socioeconomic deprivation have a greater likelihood of being entered into a foundation tier than those with a lower level of deprivation (Wilson and Dhawan, 2014). This risk-avoidance may also be driven by school-level accountability measures (Vitello and Crawford, 2018).

The English Baccalaureate (EBacc) was introduced in 2010 to measure the percentage of students achieving a 'good' grade in English, mathematics, the sciences, a language and a humanities subject. Schools are evaluated using these measures and are, therefore, under pressure to meet these targets (Ingram *et al*., 2018). One of the rationales for this change is to ensure that schools enter students for 'rigorous' GCSEs and, in doing so, enhance students' educational and occupational prospects (Long and Bolton, 2017). Armitage and Lau (2018) argue that this concept of rigour is undefined; subjects within the EBacc have been traditionally studied by high-attaining students: these subjects have a historically high status position, aligning with the belief that traditional academic subjects are more valuable than practical subjects. Despite the clear biases evident in the EBacc candidature, the DfE (2015b) argues that low expectation of any student is unacceptable and further entrenches educational inequality.

Woods *et al.*, (2018) find that in our current 'performative' culture, schools experience increased pressure to ensure improved student examination attainment. Although the case for linking schools' accountability to examination outcomes can be supported by the fact that outcomes are instrumental for future employment opportunities, there is a tension between this and the purpose of school examinations in selection by merit.

iii) Measuring progress

The 1988 Education Reform Act in England and Wales introduced a quasi-market into the state education system, in which competition between schools was introduced with the intention of driving up standards (Solomon and Lewin, 2016). Further reforms in the 1990s included the introduction of public league tables in addition to Ofsted inspection reports (Exley and Ball, 2013). The constant pressure created by these initiatives mean that measuring, monitoring and improvement are now embedded in school culture (Ball and Olmedo, 2013). Further policy initiatives were introduced by New Labour; these initiatives were a continuation of the neoliberal agenda of accountability in education (Ranson, 2008). This neoliberal vision puts the onus on individuals, schools and parents to take responsibility for the education system and its students. More recently, policies such as the 2010 Academies Act promoting academisation and the free schools programme encourage entrepreneurialism, with education being rewarded by individual merit and effort (Craske, 2018).

Ball uses Boyle's (2001) newspaper article on the subject of the increasingly dominant role of numbers and statistics in our society to illustrate the impact of this element of education reform, commenting that "the more figures we use, the more the great truths seem to slip through our fingers" (Ball, 2003, p.215). As Rogers and Gunter (2012) explain, detailed data on student performance, tracking data and setting targets has become part of the personalised learning discourse. Schools are saturated with data, including data based on students' prior attainment. The notions of personalisation and child-centredness are appealing to educators and can help to maintain the visibility of young people (Rogers and Gunter, 2012). However, it is possible that too much focus on such data leads to teachers ignoring the student as an individual and prevents teachers from focusing on the students' idiosyncratic needs and requirements. Ozga (2009) refers to data as an essential component of the state's capacity to govern, allowing schools to be more easily compared at both a local and a national level.

Expectations are an unobservable construct (Hart *et al*., 2004), and it is possible that well-meaning attempts to meet the needs of groups of learners in the classroom, and perhaps those of accountability frameworks, may actually limit a student's progress and performance. Making assumptions about a student's ability based on their prior attainment may lead teachers to ignore the richer, qualitative

data they collect on their students and contradict the original intention of the approach by neglecting the opportunity to "nurture the unique talents of every pupil" (DfES, 2004, p.4).

A further, and more recent, example of the impact of national accountability measures can be seen in the enactment of the 2010 coalition government's Pupil Premium policy, focussed on the attainment for measuring successful outcomes in disadvantaged students. Craske (2018) suggests the Pupil Premium policy is highly moralised; however, through it, teachers are judged within a high-performance system. Equity and economic efficiency are deployed within a programme dealing with social justice issues. Through the Pupil Premium policy, schools are given extra funding for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and they are held accountable for raising academic achievement using this funding and are required to publish the results (DfE, 2010).

Under Michael Gove as Secretary of State for Education, the language of Every Child Matters (Department for Education, 2003) changed to become more focussed on core knowledge (Department for Education, 2009). The Pupil Premium translates this by ensuring the academic attainment of disadvantaged students is measured, rather than simply being concerned with their well-being. Craske (2018) suggests that the Pupil Premium puts moral responsibility on teachers to rectify things they have little control over, including rebalancing the gap in attainment that exists as a consequence of economic and social deprivation (Brown, 2015). Brown (2013) also suggests that the current policy agenda of fairness as social mobility (Payne, 2012) calls for a wider definition of social justice that takes into account the issues of quality of life and the role of education beyond that of a sorting machine (Davis and Moore, 1970), within which class inequalities shape the future opportunities of students.

iv) Widening participation

Although DfE (2017b, p.9) policy suggests that their aims are to "align policy changes with the best research evidence available", this is not necessarily the case. One example of how the government can be seen as evidence-resistant, and one that is closely related to policy interpretations of high expectations, is the policy decision to invest in and expand grammar schools. Following additional funding allocated for new grammar school locations (House of Commons, 2018), critics of

the policy argue that grammar schools are damaging in terms of social equality. Gorard and Siddiqui (2016) suggest that as there is no evidence base for a policy of increasing selection, and grammar schools should be phased out, rather than increasing in number.

Historically, grammar schools were widespread in the UK, originating from a tri-partite education system after 1944, which became a two-tier system consisting of grammar schools and secondary moderns. The government had intended there to be an additional series of Secondary Technical Schools to teach mechanical, scientific and engineering skills, although they were only attended by 2-3% of children. After taking the 11+, children with high scores attended grammar schools, while those who did not meet the required standard attended secondary modern schools.

In September 2016, the law banning state-funded schools in England from using academic selection to allocate school places was removed (Foster *et al.,* 2016). Claims to support this change of policy epitomise policy definitions of high expectations. Gorard and Siddiqui (2016) summarise these claims as follows:

- Students perform better at grammar schools as opposed to non-selective schools;
- Poorest children attending grammar schools perform better, therefore grammar schools promote social mobility;
- There is no harmful consequence for students in other schools.

As Perry (2016) explains, these claims are problematic as published school performance measures can be misleading due to the high level of uncertainty in the estimates of individual schools. Detailed analyses have tended to show there is little or no substantive difference between the effectiveness of any type of school within a national school system (Rutt and Styles, 2013). Furthermore, the stratification created by grammar schools can increase the impact of social and economic status and increase low expectations (Parker *et al*., 2016), widening the gap between the privileged and less privileged (Collado *et al*., 2015).

Jerrim and Sims (2018) find there is little evidence that gaining entry into a grammar school has a positive impact on socio-emotional outcomes, and that grammar school students have similar levels of engagement and self-confidence and aspirations and expectations as their comprehensive-school educated peers. Any

advantage accruing to children from low-income or working-class origins who attend grammar schools is cancelled out by an equivalent mobility disadvantage suffered by those who attend secondary moderns (Boliver and Swift, 2011).

Blandford (2018) suggests that as the curriculum is more relevant for middle-class students, a more meaningful measure of working-class attainment could be destination outcomes. The author recommends that all young people should be provided with the choice of further study, including apprenticeships, with the aim of increasing opportunities and life chances for a wider range of students. McLellan *et al.*, (2016) remind us that since 1992, there has been a sharp increase in the number of people participating in higher education in the UK. Despite this increase, attending higher education is segregated by class, geography and ethnicity. Boliver (2013) observes that working-class and state-school students are less likely to apply to Russell Group universities and are much less likely to receive an offer at these universities than privately educated applicants with the same qualifications.

Despite this, the blame for the under-representation of disadvantaged students in elite universities is sometimes placed on schools, as well as on the students themselves (Russell Group, 2013). Furthermore, Harrison and Waller (2017) contend that for elite universities, widening participation tends to be defined instead by widening access, as they encourage applications from high-attaining students who would otherwise choose lower-status institutions.

v) Changes to school structures to improve opportunity

Recent changes in the English educational landscape have been significant, including the rapid rise in the number of academies following the Academies Act 2010, which means that 30% of state-run schools are now academy schools (DfE, 2017a). Two-thirds of academies are sponsored academies, which are subject to central planning and standard operating procedures devised by a multi-academy trust (Hill, 2015). The academy model is an alternative system of school organisation from the previous model in which, from 1944, state schools were organised within a geographically defined LEA. The stated aim of the government is for all schools to become academies; the preferred system of governance is within a multi-academy trust (Gibson, 2018).

The workplace in this case study is a 'converter', or stand-alone, academy. As such, the governing body is responsible for holding senior school leaders accountable for its educational and financial performance. The academies' programme has been presented as a vehicle for facilitating a school-led system, but the existence of large-scale multi-academy trusts (MATs) can undermine rather than enhance school autonomy (Wilkins, 2017). MATs vary in size, geographical reach and governance organisation, but are arguably favourable from the point of view of the government as they expand opportunities for increased instrumentalist and market-oriented approaches to school governance (Wilkins, 2017).

Hilton (2019) explains that whilst Labour's Academy Schools were designed as a school improvement tool by being situated in areas of high deprivation, this socio-economic limitation was abandoned by the coalition government (2010 – 2015). Additionally, free schools are conceptually and legally an extension of the academies programme and can be established wherever there is evidence of demand. This 'demand', which creates a market for education, maintains a Conservative theme of policy in which parental choice will place competitive pressures on schools to improve standards (DfE, 2010). Consequently, rather than being a vehicle for social justice, free schools have been concentrated in urban, affluent and gentrifying locations, and benefitting from a selective admissions' policy (Allen and Burgess, 2010).

Currently, the policy narrative of academies' transformative potential for the educational outcomes of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds seems to be less prominent (Hutchings and Francis, 2018). Furthermore, there are concerns that accountability structures may encourage multi-academy trusts to attempt to maximise their results. Strategies such as 'off-rolling' students before their GCSE exams, the practice of removing a student from the school roll without using a permanent exclusion, and when the removal is primarily in the best interests of the school, rather than in the best interests of the student, are becoming more prevalent. Disadvantaged students are more likely to be off-rolled than their peers (Bradbury, 2018). Therefore, the government talks of fairer access to education, while market rules have become further entrenched into the English education system (Brown, 2013).

2.4 Evidence-based practice?

The government's commitment to evidence-based teaching can be evidenced in several ways. These include the pledge made in the White Paper 'Educational Excellence Everywhere' (2016) to incentivise researchers to conduct research that can improve practice, and in the continued funding of the Education Endowment Foundation, founded in 2011 with the aim of improving students' attainment through the sharing of educational research and resources, as well as through supporting the recently formed Chartered College of Teaching, formed in 2017 with the aim of being a conduit to a more evidence-informed profession.

However, the current government has a preference for particular methodologies and methods as well as subsequent findings in educational research, as exemplified in Goldacre's (2013) government commissioned report 'Building Evidence into Education', proposing randomised control trials (seen as the 'gold standard' of educational research) as a means of testing educational interventions. This debate has particular relevance to this research as the questions asked in the study are based on Rubie-Davies *et al.*'s (2015) RCT, in which the practices of high-expectation teachers are modelled and students' achievements are subsequently measured. This debate will, therefore, be explored further in chapter 3.5, while explaining the rationale for the methodological approach to my research design.

The government's predilection for particular methodologies and foci for educational research is evident in the differential treatment of the findings in this literature review and in government policy. Despite the policy rhetoric and social democratic discourse that opportunity will be provided for every child to reach their full potential, policies on exam reform and the re-introduction of grammar schools can have the opposite effect on student attainment. The DfE's (2019a) analysis of the 2018 GCSE exam results, for example, shows that the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged students and others at secondary schools has grown by 0.6%, after two previous years during which this gap had narrowed.

2.5 Terminology, measurement and heritability

As evident from exploring the policy definitions of 'high expectations', the terminology of 'a culture of high expectation', is complex and problematic. To gain a

richer understanding of it, it may be necessary to define what is meant by 'high expectation'. Social psychologists (Berger, Cohen and Zeldich, 1972; Correll and Ridgeway, 2003) refer to the expectation states theory to explain the emergence of status hierarchies in socially important contexts, including the classroom. When members of a group anticipate that a particular individual will make more valuable contributions, they will defer to that individual and give them more opportunities to participate. This can shape behaviour in a self-fulfilling way. Equally, a student with lower performance expectations may have their contributions ignored or poorly evaluated.

Expectation states theory is related to the ways in which teachers assimilate information about their students as they form their expectations about academic performance, attitudes and social development. Expectations can be linked to prior attainment, but also to perceived effort. Furthermore, student characteristics such as social class, ethnicity and gender may influence teacher expectation. (Rubie-Davies, 2015). Teacher expectations may lead to differential teacher behaviour, including the provision of differential learning materials, learning opportunities and teacher-student interactions (De Boer *et al*., 2019).

A further complexity in creating a culture of high expectations is the notion of heritability. Krapohl *et al.*, (2014) find that learning is more difficult for some children. Their study concludes that the high heritability of educational achievement reflects many genetically influenced traits, not only intelligence but also psychological domains such as self-efficacy, personality, well-being and behaviour. Although heavily disputed (James, 2015; Gillborn, 2016), theoretical developments in the field of intelligence suggest that not only intelligence but also other aspects of behaviour are heritable to some extent. The effects of genes on intelligence, however, are not determinative (Nisbett *et al.*, 2012). Non-intellective motivational factors also contribute to IQ scores, such as incentives for good test performance (Duckworth *et al.*, 2011). Genes, however, play a minor role in determining IQ in severely impoverished circumstances: these variables dominate the influence on IQ, and the genes that control IQ only become significant when these limitations are removed (Turkheimer, 1990).

Further studies also point to the influence of nurture, finding patterns emerging in early childhood linked to declining expectations (Burhans and Dweck, 1995; Evans *et al.*, 2005; El-Sheikh, Cummings and Kellar, 2007). These demonstrate that young children can be vulnerable to a helpless response to failure, particularly when living

in chaotic conditions that may interfere with the development of competency, a sense of mastery and, additionally, lead to helplessness, a preference for non-challenges and lack of persistence in the face of a challenge.

Therefore, to reduce social inequalities, it is imperative that inequitable processes are redressed, not only for potential consequences in the classroom, but also for the purposes of equity in wider society. Although schools cannot entirely compensate for these factors, any opportunity to explicitly raise expectations should be seen as a moral imperative.

2.6 A history of teacher expectancy research

Merton (1948) first proposed the idea that people interact with others in ways that cause their resulting behaviours to align to fulfil those beliefs. This phenomenon was named the self-fulfilling prophecy effect. The concept was later related to education in an initial experimental study 'Pygmalion in the Classroom'; Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) reported that experimentally created teacher expectations resulted in changed performance on the part of the students. Teachers were told by researchers that one group of students would make significantly more progress than their peers. Despite the fact that these 'bloomers' were randomly selected, this group showed greater IQ gains over the course of a year than a control group of students. In terms of context, it had traditionally been thought that education could do little to alter innate traits, but these findings helped lead to an increasing awareness that environment could also impact on student attainment, both positively and negatively, and that some students were being unfairly disadvantaged by the education system in terms of teacher expectation (Rubie-Davies, 2017). Although Rubie-Davies (2017) does not draw upon this research, the author posits that teacher expectations are often inaccurate, and once formed, tend to be stable.

The Pygmalion controversy has been continuing for five decades until the present day, perhaps because it reflects the seemingly indestructible nature/nurture controversy and disputes about the malleability of intelligence (Spitz, 1999; Rubie-Davies *et al.*, 2015; Francis *et al*., 2017). Although the Pygmalion study offers insight into the impact of teacher expectations on students, and how teachers' constructions of their students impact on their expectations, its central thesis that

teacher expectancy raises IQ is problematic, partially because Burt's (1966) later work on the heritability of IQ has largely been discredited as a model of measuring intelligence when evidence emerged that Burt falsified research data (Kamin 1974; Hearnshaw, 1979; Joynson, 1989).

Rosenthal and Jacobson's work did lead to a plethora of investigations, however. Their initial research was experimental, in that teachers were given false information about a random selection of students, and the effects of this knowledge on students' IQ was studied. Several researchers (Claiborn, 1969; Greiger, 1970; Jose and Cody, 1971) attempted to replicate their results, but none found statistically significant differences between the control and experimental groups (Rubie-Davies, 2015).

Meta-analyses, such as Spitz (1999) and Jussim and Harber (2005), review additional Pygmalion replications. Spitz (1999) finds that only one out of the nineteen experimental studies conducted, (Maxwell, 1970), supports the results of the Pygmalion experiment. Jussim and Harber's (2005) review of the teacher expectation literature finds that self-fulfilling prophecies in the classroom do exist, but the effects tend to be smaller than initially reported. Additionally, it also suggests that the Pygmalion study may have caught the public's imagination as a way of accounting for the long-term entrenchment of social inequalities. They do observe, however, that several large self-fulfilling prophecies have been found with regard to members of some at-risk groups, particularly lower achieving students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Hattie's (2009) meta-analysis includes both experimental and naturalistic studies and finds that the effect of teacher expectation on student outcomes is, by his definition, meaningful, with an overall effect size of d = 0.43.

These types of experimental studies, however, may have some limitations, partially due to the difficulties in experimental controls in the classroom (Rubie-Davies, 2015). The wider field of teacher expectation, including intervention studies, is based on a range of methodologies that are normally embedded within investigations of social influences in schools that impact on student attainment (Rubie-Davies, 2018). The field also includes descriptive studies identifying behaviours, characteristics and beliefs associated with high and low teacher expectations (Rubie-Davies *et al.,* 2015). Therefore, the study of teacher expectations could be described as a study of relationships and their significance in student learning.

One focus for teacher expectation research has been the differential teacher interactions with students of varying ages and stages of development. These include Brophy's (1970) study, finding that teachers' interactions maximize the achievement progress of high-expectation students but limit the progress of low-expectation students. Similarly, Brattesani, Weinstein and Marshall (1984) claim that teachers' behaviour communicates their achievement expectations to their students and, consequently, influences students' expectations and achievement.

The differential teacher interactions with students is derived from the variance in teacher beliefs and expectations (Rubie-Davies 2007, 2010). Much of the teacher expectation research has focused on the occurrence of inaccurate teacher expectations and its relationship to other constructs, such as academic achievement, demographic background, motivation and engagement and teacher characteristics and beliefs (De Boer *et al.*, 2018). Teachers may have biased expectations for most students in a class or for specific sub-groups, such as low-achievers, students from low-income families or minority groups (Timmermans *et al.*, 2015).

De Boer *et al.*, (2018) suggest that the differential treatment of high- and low-expectation students may account, at least partially, for the expectancy-confirming impact of teacher expectations on student achievement. Teachers differ in their level of expectations for the students in their classroom, and this is reflected in their teaching behaviour. Therefore, teachers who have lower expectations of their students provide fewer opportunities for them to learn (Rubie-Davies 2007; 2010).

De Boer *et al.*,'s. (2018) literature review analysing the effects of teacher expectation interventions focuses on studies that changed teacher behaviour, created awareness of teacher expectation effects, or on the beliefs underlying teacher expectations and, in some cases, a combination of these. The authors find that it is possible to raise teacher expectations and, consequently, to raise student achievement with teacher expectation interventions. However, in terms of student outcomes, these results seem difficult to interpret as some interventions studied in their review had a broader focus than solely teacher expectation.

Studies linking teacher expectation to student achievement, such as Rubie-Davies *et al*., (2015) and Hattie (2009) have used the quantitative methods of randomised control trials and meta-analysis to analyse the impact of teacher expectation on students' work, with teacher expectation defined here as the beliefs that teachers

hold about the level of achievement their students are likely to achieve in the future. Similar to De Boer *et al.,* (2018), the authors suggest that the beliefs and practices derived from teacher expectations may impact on student learning, in that when teachers have high expectations for student achievement, they interact with their students in ways that cause their expectations to become realised.

2.7 The beliefs and practices of high- and low-expectation teachers

i) Flexible grouping

The benefits of the practices of Rubie-Davies *et al*.,'s (2015) low differentiating teachers, defined here as teachers who believe that all students should have similar learning opportunities, are supported elsewhere in the research literature (Weinstein, 2002; Babad, 2009). They find that high-expectation teachers do not group their students by perceived ability, suggesting that within-class ability grouping, in addition to setting, can have detrimental effects on the students' self-beliefs. Instead, high expectation teachers do not differentiate learning experiences, allowing students to choose the classroom activities they complete (Rubie-Davies, 2015), therefore differentiating by choice and outcome It could be suggested, however, that students are more likely to make progress at different rates, therefore adapting teaching in a responsive way is likely to improve educational outcomes, such as providing support to students who are making less progress (Van Geel *et al.,* 2019*)*. It may be possible to distinguish this type of adaptive teaching from differentiated learning experiences in which teachers create tasks based on their lower expectations for particular students.

Kutnick, Blatchford and Baines (2005) also agree that within-class 'ability' grouping may inhibit classroom learning. Additionally, Baines (2012) states that it is not setting or streaming alone that has the greatest impact on academic performance, but the differentiating curriculum and instructional methods that are combined with it. Within-class ability grouping may be a more flexible approach than setting, but Baines (2012) warns against the labelling and expectations inherent in this type of classroom organisation.

Despite the preference that politicians express for grouping students according to attainment, for example (DfE, 2015a), Kutnick, Blatchford and Baines (2005) suggest that this form of grouping has few significant effects on achievement, aside from replicating the pre-established achievement hierarchy of social class. Ireson and Hallam (2005) also propose that setting readily establishes status hierarchies, accompanied by stereotypes and expectations of students. In contrast, Rubie-Davies *et al*., (2015) observe that more flexible grouping practices have benefits for student learning. Taylor *et al*., (2018) are in agreement that static setting perpetuates inequity as students cannot work towards being placed in higher attaining groups.

Indeed, the term 'ability grouping' is in itself problematic, confusing educational attainment with a notion of innate potential academic ability and furthering the concept that educational inequalities in outcome are inevitable (Francis *et al.,* 2016). 'Ability' is not easily assessed: attainment groups are usually formed on the basis of performance on attainment tests or on perceived ability in one or more curriculum areas (Baines, 2012).

However, there is evidence to suggest that programmes for 'gifted' students, which provide higher attaining students with a different curriculum, are the most impactful form of intervention for these students (Hattie, 2009). Similarly, advocates of attainment grouping maintain that it allows teachers to adapt instructions to the requirements of a diverse student body, giving them an opportunity to provide more difficult material to higher attaining students and more support to previously lower attaining students (Slavin, 1990; Macintyre and Ireson, 2002).

Sahlgren's (2018) literature review on 'what works' to raise the performance of higher attaining students finds a common denominator across studies which is a focus on enrichment with independent learning. Contrary to the current educational policy narrative, which is ideologically placed towards direct instruction (Ofsted, 2019), Sahlgren (2018) suggests that discovery-based learning models can improve performance among learners who have mastered knowledge and skills, and may therefore benefit from this type of pedagogy. Among non-expert learners, guided and teacher-led instruction that enable students to obtain the relevant information and transfer it to long-term memory may be preferable methods (Kirschner *et al*., 2006; Sweller *et al.*, 2007). This may be because teacher-led approaches allow teachers to guide and gradually prompt learners as they compile and build knowledge. It is important, however, that these differing pedagogical approaches

are not related to attainment grouping but to mastery of the learning, as teachers' adaptation of pedagogic practices according to attainment grouping may restrict the kinds of teaching and learning that lower attaining students experience (Mazenod *et al*., 2018).

A further complexity lies in the identification of higher attaining students. Previously, schools had been directed (DfE, 1999) to identify 5 - 10% of their students as gifted and talented and place them on a register. A co-ordinator was responsible for the education of these students in each school, and a specialist teaching and learning programme was expected to be put into place. An evaluation of the policy (Ofsted, 2003) found that sustained impact on the attainment of these students was limited and identification methods rudimentary: the requirement of using a percentage-based identification strategy may have led to schools relying on quantitative test measurements to create these cohorts. Further concerns raised in the evaluation were expressed by the appointed gifted and talented co-ordinators, who felt that all students, not just the chosen few, were entitled to effective provisions (Koshey *et al.,* 2018). Furthermore, Francis *et al.*, (2017) suggest that the advocacy for setting on the basis of benefitting high attaining students contradicts the lack of benefits in segregation that emerges from the research literature on attainment grouping.

ii) The consequences of teacher–student relationships

In addition to the importance of flexible grouping practices, Rubie-Davies *et al.*, (2015) draw on Weinstein's (2009) research, categorising teachers as 'high and low differentiating'. The differential treatment of students by teachers may partially account for the expectancy-confirming impact of teacher expectation on student achievement (Hughes *et al*., 2005). Weinstein (2009), for example, finds that in the classes of low differentiating teachers, the gap between high- and low-expectation student achievements decreased over a year. The consequences of teacher bias are reported by Babad (1995) who finds that students perceive their teachers as giving low achievers more learning support and putting less pressure on them than high achievers, but also as giving high achievers more warmth and emotional support.

Weinstein (2002) describes how the effect of expectations is a product of both teachers' beliefs as well as their pedagogical practices, alongside student evaluation of the interactions teachers have with them. These expectation effects may compound over time. High differentiating teachers group students by attainment, hold views that intelligence is fixed, motivate students extrinsically, limit student agency and have differential relations with both students and their parents and carers. They limit the opportunity of recognition to only a few students (Weinstein, 2002). Similarly, Babad (2009) finds that high-bias teachers are led by stereotypical information about their students, thereby creating biased expectations. The research shows that students are incredibly perceptive in describing teachers' differential treatment of high and low-expectation students. Babad (2009) notes that this information is often conveyed to students through non-verbal channels, such as showing hostility, anger, tension and rigidity through non-verbal behaviour, as teachers may be able to control what they say, but not what they feel.

The findings of Rubie-Davies *et al.*, (2015) are also in agreement with Ireson and Hallam (2005, p.298), whose study supports the benefits of positive teacher-student relationships. It suggests that students who feel supported by their teachers are less likely to become alienated and disengaged from their work, claiming that environments that "foster a sense of belonging should also promote achievement". Muller, Katz and Dance (1999) report that students are more likely to invest in a cooperative relationship with teachers who were in their favour. Favourite teachers possess characteristics including a good sense of humour, the ability to motivate all students to work hard, fairness and accessibility, and empathetic regard for all students.

iii) Further practices of high-expectation teachers

High-expectation teachers spend more time providing a framework for students' learning, making more statements related to teaching new concepts, orienting students to the lesson and linking new concepts with prior knowledge, and using statements to provide a framework for learning (Rubie-Davies, 2015). Rosenshine (2012) acknowledges that a review of previous learning processes ensures that students have a clear understanding of the material to be covered in the lesson, presenting small amounts of new material at a time and asking questions to determine how much has been learnt. Rubie-Davies (2015) also finds that high-

expectation teachers ask more questions, particularly open and higher-order questions that are designed to extend the students' thinking.

The final aspect of practice in which high-expectation teachers differ markedly is through goal setting based on regular, formative evaluation. Providing students with clear, specific feedback about their goals can aid student progress (Hattie and Timperley, 2006; Rubie-Davies *et al*., 2015). Hattie and Timperley (2006) claim that feedback is among the most powerful influences on achievement and that to have the most impact, feedback needs to be purposeful, meaningful and compatible with prior knowledge as well as related to specific and clear goals. The authors warn against directing feedback at the level of self, as the use of praise unrelated to task performance can direct attention away from the task to be completed. Therefore praise and feedback about learning should be separated (Hattie and Timperley, 2006).

Hattie (2009) also suggests that the knowledge of setting students' mastery goals increases the value of feedback, as the notions of challenge and commitment are central to the effects of feedback. These type of goals inform students about the level of performance to aim for, allow students and their teachers to set further appropriately challenging goals, and ensure students do not become dependent on the presence of feedback, which may be a consequence if the tasks they are given are too easy for them.

Hattie (2009) states that feedback can be most effective when students do not have mastery; therefore, errors made are an opportunity to learn. This debate has current relevance due to the popularity, and perhaps the marketisation, of Dweck's (2006) theories of growth-mindset and fixed-mindset, which have received widespread recognition in the English education system. As Ball (2007) argues, the pressures of globalisation have had an accelerating impact on education, and the private sector has an extensive reach in all aspects of schooling. This involves changes in what it means to be a teacher and a learner: one example of this is the way Dweck's (2006) research has been adapted for commercial use in schools. According to Dweck's (2006) theory, people with a fixed mindset believe intelligence is fixed, and those with a growth mindset believe effort can improve intelligence. However, Dweck's research has proven difficult to replicate (Education Endowment Foundation, 2015).

Dweck (2019) suggests that one challenge in replicating growth mindset interventions comes from practitioners' misinterpretations of growth mindset and how to foster it, as teachers simply exhort students to try hard without giving any further guidance as to how this could be achieved. As a consequence, the author's (2006) work 'Mindset' has been revised with further guidance to classroom interventions in terms of implementation. A further complexity to interventions such as these is suggested by Ecclestone (2004), who critiques the use of therapeutic perspectives to view educational failure, asserting that we should instead see educational failure socially or politically, as outcomes of an education system that uses assessment to segregate students for unequal opportunities.

Similar to Hattie (2009), Yeagar and Dweck (2012, p.311) comment on the impact of adult use of praise on students' mindset. They argue that to promote resilience, students should be praised for their effort, their strategies, their focus or their persistence. They find that "focusing more on process rather than ability can put students in a mindset that helps them respond to challenges resiliently".

2.8 Differentiation and personalised learning

Rubie-Davies (2015) suggests that information about a student's prior attainment has a larger effect on teacher expectation than any other factor, leading teachers to plan differing learning experiences for various groups of students. Rubie-Davies (2015, p.35) defines differentiated instructional planning and its associated pedagogical choices as "the point at which teachers' beliefs about learning and their expectations for students are translated into opportunities to learn". Brevik *et al.*, (2018) propose that learning is most effective when teachers can assess students' strengths and areas for development and, subsequently, use this information to help students' progress.

However, the consequences of differentiated instructional practices can become problematic. Shavelson and Stern (1981) find that instructional planning for students perceived as having lower ability differs from that of planning for higher-ability students. Rubie-Davies (2015) furthers this assertion by suggesting that differences in practices in lessons taught to students of higher and lower attainment means that lower attaining students do not have as many opportunities to develop higher-order thinking. This, perhaps, partially explains why high-expectation students learn more:

they have the opportunity to do so. Differential learning opportunities can therefore lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy effect.

Brophy (1985) identifies seventeen teacher behaviours that differ according to whether the behaviour was directed at a high- or low-attaining student. The findings suggest that teacher interactions with low-attaining students are of a lower quality and did not seem to be extending students' thinking, for example, teachers tended to wait less time for low- attaining students to answer a question, and call on them less frequently to answer questions. Instead, low-attaining students are monitored more closely, offered less autonomy and given less choice over their learning activities.

Darling-Hammond and Sayder (2000, p.523) summarise the challenge of designing effective differentiated instruction as teaching that "responds to human diversity and aims for cognitive flexibility", suggesting that this requires a "wide range of teaching strategies that are activated by sophisticated judgments grounded in disciplined experimentation, insightful interpretation and continuous reflection". Teaching should, therefore, aim to make use of variability rather than allow students to be limited by it. This summary suggests that effective differentiation is grounded in the teachers' understanding of the unique needs of a student, in addition to their commonalities.

Although the terms 'personalised learning' and 'differentiation' are often used interchangeably, Bray and McClaskey (2015) define the difference between them as personalised learning beginning with the learner first, whereas differentiation being adaptation for individual students. Hartley (2009) comments on the government's commitment to personalised learning as well as on the way the concept can be interpreted as adapting education to the needs of a consumerist society: the construct of personalised learning is derived from a policy emphasis on learning in public services. For instance, Miliband, when he was Minister of State for Education, (DfES, 2004, p.9) claimed that personalised learning entailed:

> high expectations of every child, given practical form by high quality teaching based on a sound knowledge and understanding of each child's needs…it means shaping teaching around the way different youngsters learn; it means taking the care to nurture the unique talents of every pupil.

Prain *et al.*, (2013) assert that this need not imply a fixed labelling of learner capacities but an ongoing responsive programming to each student's needs, and the authors stress the importance of a relational agency of mutual responsibility for the learning developed between teachers and students. Inevitably, there are constraints to these goals, such as teacher time, skills and resources. The advocacy of personalised learning has led to two counter-productive classroom practices: a hyper-individualised approach to curriculum and learner abandonment (Hartley, 2009). Teachers need to provide opportunities for meaningful collaborative student learning as well as personalised independent learning experiences to enable them to participate as co-learners in a learning community. Furthermore, teachers need to have a deep knowledge of the capabilities and interests of each of their students in order to support them effectively (Prain *et al.*, 2018).

A further complication in creating effective personalised learning practices is explored by Webster and Blatchford (2018), who describe the importance of the quality of the educational experiences of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They claim that teaching assistants assume too much responsibility for pedagogical decision-making for students with SEND, providing a high amount of verbal differentiation, partially to compensate for the teachers' failure to set appropriate tasks. Webster and Blatchford (2018, p. 12) find an "ambiguity and open-endedness" in the conceptualisations of differentiation, commenting specifically on the lack of justification for ability grouping, particularly for average and previously lower-attaining students. They suggest that schools should consider adopting grouping strategies that mitigate some of the effects of setting (Francis *et al.*, 2017, Mazenod *et al*., 2018), ensuring that students with SEND have opportunities to interact with and learn from others.

Brevik *et al.*, (2018) agree that differentiation in education is a powerful concept, but it is challenging to implement. Additionally, although many teachers are committed to meeting the needs of individual students, they may lack the knowledge to put this into practice. When differentiation strategies are applied, they tend to consist of more drill and practice for low-attaining students, and advanced content for higher attainers (Tomlinson, 2014). Brevik *et al.*, (2018) propound that teachers may use test scores to establish information about their students, but warn that their strengths may not be reflected in these measurements.

2.9 Professional regulation and performance management

A further definition of high expectation teachers is from the location of professional regulation and performance management. The standards agenda has dominated education policy and rhetoric since the 1970s under former Prime Minister Callaghan (Elton-Chalcraft *et al*., 2017; Williams-Brown and Jopling, 2019), although the marketization associated with the standards agenda intensified following the Education Reform Act (1988). By the late 1990s, the government introduced greater control of teachers and greater expectations of them through the introduction of the national curriculum for teacher training, and teacher competencies were developed into Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2011). In England, achieving standards for trainee teachers is a requirement for gaining Qualified Teacher Status. The teachers' standards dictate the boundaries of teachers' roles, redefining but also fragmenting their professionalism (Leaton-Gray and Whitty, 2010) and positioning the teacher as performative technician whilst simultaneously diminishing autonomy (Ryan and Bourke, 2013).

Standards are central to neoliberalism, as neoliberalism is a system of performance, and performative behaviour is easy to standardize and measure in market terms (Mason, 2019). The Education Reform Act (1988) reduced teachers' responsibility for designing the curriculum, and the ability to use their professional judgement with regard to standards (Gunter, 2008). Successive governments, irrespective of their political ideology, continued to focus on the need for standards and accountability in education. One example of this was the Coalition Government's Education Act (2011), which purported to help teachers to raise standards, and to strengthen teachers' accountability for their actions (Williams-Brown and Jopling, 2019) in addition to articulating teachers' work in terms of observable competencies (Elton-Chalcraft *et al*., 2017).

There is debate concerning the purpose of teacher standards, and whether they are concerned with improving performance or reforming the profession (Sachs, 2003). Equally, there are tensions concerning the determining and monitoring of standards, as standards that are developed by the government are seen as a means of providing accountability, whereas standards developed by the profession itself may provide greater scope for professional learning (Groundwater-Smith and Sachs, 2002). Evans (2011) posits that the 'real' shape of teacher professionalism will be forged by teachers themselves, rather than through policy.

The current teacher standards exist on a continuum from their original form: in 2011, the then Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, stated that the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2012) were an initiative designed to be used by headteachers in performance management and induction (Gove, 2011). Performance management and performance cultures are now embedded in policies and practices of education, and are especially evident around government interventions to impose professional standards on the teaching profession. In the light of increasing demands for accountability and transparency, the use of performance indicators is a strategy whereby student learning outcomes and teacher performance can be measured (Perryman and Calvert, 2019).

In terms of high expectations as defined by the Teacher Standards, teachers are required to "inspire, motivate and challenge pupils; establish a safe and stimulating environment, rooted in mutual respect; set goals that stretch and challenge pupils of all backgrounds, abilities and dispositions and demonstrate consistently the positive attitudes, values and behaviour which are expected of pupils" (DfE, 2012, p.1). The language used here places the onus on the teacher to build active trust with their partners in education (Goepel, 2012). Similarly to what is defined as a teacher with 'high expectations' in the theoretical models previously described, the standards are partially concerned with the relational aspects of teaching relating to the notion of agreement through collaboration and partnership (Biesta, 2009). The standards are also related to the values and attributes the teachers are expected to display. In the requirement to "stretch and challenge pupils of all backgrounds, abilities and dispositions" however, there is an additional emphasis on performance and achievement. Therefore, the teacher has to meet the demand of building relationships of trust, whilst being held accountable and highly regulated by governments, policy makers (Goepel, 2012), and since 2011, through performance management systems (Gove, 2011).

Beck (2009) notes that each standard begins with an active verb, depicting a professionalism that is focussed predominately on what teachers do, rather than what they think and rather than the attitudes they hold. This applies the narrowest definitions of teaching as potentially observable interaction with students (Evans, 2011). Therefore, the standards can be interpreted as 'performative' professionalism, as the skills and competencies of what teachers do and how they do it is prioritised over the extent to which they analyse their practice (Beck, 2009).

Individuals' performance is measured in relation to this stipulated practice, and if they fail to measure up to it, they are required to develop in line with it. Thus, performance management can be seen a tool for the government to shape teacher professionalism (Evans, 2011).

2.10 Professionalism and personal identity

Evans (2011) suggests that there is a lack of consensus over the meaning of professionalism, therefore we need to work with plural conceptions of it. Most interpretations focus on the setting and defining of what lies within the parameters of a profession's collective remit and responsibilities. As explained previously, one interpretation of professionalism is that it is a service-level agreement, imposed by government. However, any professionalism is constructed of individuals' practice (Wilkins, 2011). Lingard (2009, p. 82) observes that teacher practice is "local, situated, specific and contingent, in contrast to the universalistic claims of policy". Evans (2011) refers to this conception of professionalism as enacted professionalism, which constantly re-shapes itself through the dynamic agency of its practitioners. Therefore, government policy and directives represent only one influence on professionalism (Hoyle and Wallace, 2007), as teachers will oppose a professionalism that they do not recognise as 'better' than their own existing practice (Beck, 2009).

The concept of professionalism is related to teacher identity, as 'teacher professional identity' refers to the way teachers view and understand themselves as teachers (Mockler, 2011). The professional identity of the teachers is formed through the narratives of the fabric of the teachers' lives (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999), and their work and professional practice is constituted across and out of different domains. Mockler (2011) defines these as including: teachers' own personal experience, such as their backgrounds and perceptions of schooling; their professional context, including career histories and school and system contexts, and the domain of the external political environment, including the development of government policy. These domains are also shifting and reflexive, and teachers' notions of what constitutes 'high expectations' may be dependent on circumstantial and contextual catalysts (Mockler, 2011), and at the confluence of each lies the individual's unique embodiment of what it is to 'be' a teacher (Clandinin *et al*., 2006).

Identity can also be defined in terms of the narratives that teachers create to explain themselves and their teaching lives (Connelley and Clandinin, 1999), and in the variety of discourses teachers participate in and produce (Alsup, 2006). Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) suggest that in addition to the dynamic nature of teacher identity, context is also key, as within a context teachers learn professional characteristics that are adopted by individuals in unique ways. By participating in a community of professionals, a teacher is subject to the influences of this community on identity development (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009). Gee (2001) recognises that a person might have a 'core identity', but there are multiple forms of this identity as one operates across different contexts, therefore identity may change shape due to external influences. Similarly, Sachs (2005) defines teacher professional identity as negotiated through experience, and the sense that is made of that experience. Through this framework, teachers construct their own ideas of 'how to be', 'how to act', and 'how to understand' their work.

Nias (1989) reminds us of the necessity for teachers to be emotionally committed to different aspects of their jobs, as their sense of moral responsibility is at the core of their professional identity: it is the interaction between their sense of moral purpose and professional practice. Teachers have their own models and constructions of what the notion of 'high expectations' means to them, and therefore a tension exists between these differing definitions.

2.11 Reflections

This literature review has summarised the past and current state of information on the topic of teacher expectation, and its role in perpetuating the inequalities in the educational system, and has explored a brief history of teacher expectation research, in addition to the beliefs and practices of high- and low-expectation teachers as defined by Rubie-Davies (2015). In addition, I have explored the literature around what is defined as a teacher with 'high expectations' from the locations of government policy; professional regulation and performance management and notions of professional identity. I have also explored the complexities of creating a culture of high expectation in addition to outlining my personal and professional reasons for selecting the phenomenon of teacher expectation.

The review of the literature helped formulate my research questions in that my questions are generated from the existing teacher expectation intervention studies. Although Rubie-Davies's (2015) teacher expectation project draws its participants from a broad socioeconomic range, the context is different from my own study as Rubie-Davies's (2015) study focusses on students in New Zealand aged from 8 to 12. This difference in context to my own study may mean challenging the assumptions that underlie the existing literature, particularly in terms of the impact of wider socio-economic and political inequities in the UK at the time of writing. Therefore, my research questions are based on the beliefs and practices of high expectation teachers as outlined by Rubie-Davies (2015), but will also problematise the literature, by asking in addition about the barriers to creating a culture of high expectation. In my exploration of the literature, I have also shown how the definitions of high expectations are not universally agreed, further problematising the phenomenon (Alvsesson and Sandberg, 2013). Therefore, a 'high expectation' teacher will be recognised through theoretical models and notions of teacher identity rather than through observable competencies (Elton-Chalcraft *et al.*, 2017) related to professional regulation, or through government policy, as defining 'high expectation' teachers is complex, value and context laden.

The main research questions to be considered are as follows:

1. What are teachers' and students' perceptions of teacher expectations in the workplace?
2. What strategies do teachers and students believe teachers use to create a culture of high expectation?
3. What are the perceived barriers to creating a culture of high expectation?

Chapter 3: Research Design

3.1 Research questions

Having reviewed the research literature surrounding the topic of teacher expectation, and its role in perpetuating inequalities in the educational system, I will now explore the theoretical framework underpinning the methodological approach I have adopted for my research. Furthermore, I will also discuss my ontological stance. An explanation of the research methodology employed in my research design will be given, which will be informed by some of the relevant literature.

Following my review of the research literature, and differing definitions of teacher expectation, my understanding is that the positions on what makes a 'high expectation' teacher are contradictory, and not universally agreed. In addition to the beliefs and practices of high expectation teachers as defined by Rubie-Davies (2015), I have also explored what makes a 'high expectation' teacher through government policy, professional regulation and performance management, and through theoretical models and notions of professional identity. These explorations have led to the main research questions to be considered, which are as follows:

1. What are teachers' and students' perceptions of teacher expectations in the workplace?
2. What strategies do teachers and students believe teachers use to create a culture of high expectations?
3. What are the perceived barriers to creating a culture of high expectations?

Green (2008) suggests that to be researchable, research questions should have at least six properties: interesting (to maintain motivation whilst maintaining a critically reflexive stance); relevant (maintaining a balance between the interests of the researcher and the research community as a whole); feasible (defined with specific boundaries); ethical (fulfilling all ethical obligations); concise (written with precision) and answerable (descriptive and analytical). It is with reference to these properties that I have formulated and refined my research questions. This process of refinement has continued following my initial research proposal; this is because on reflection, my original research design of blending case study with action research had the potential to become overly complex and methodologically confusing. This is because case study involves the study of a particular case or a number of cases. The case will be complex and bounded and studied in its context (Tight, 2017).

Action research is more focused on participation, reflection and action that pursues practical solutions (Piggot-Irvine *et al.,* 2015). Therefore, in terms of methodology, my reasons for choosing case study are explored below.

3.2 Epistemological framework

Richardson (1994) defines writing as a way of 'knowing', and a method of discovery and analysis. It is a research practice through which we can investigate how we construct the world, ourselves and others. The author reminds us that our writing is always partial, local and situational. Similarly, Cresswell (2013) explains that in interpretive research, reality is socially constructed, and there is no single observable reality. Seeing knowledge as personal, subjective and unique means rejecting an objectivist approach to social science and positivism (the belief that social phenomena can be researched in ways similar to natural, physical phenomena) in favour of a subjectivist approach. A positivist approach means that analyses must be expressed in law-like generalisations of the same kind that have been established in relation to natural phenomena (Giddens, 1975). This approach is less successful when applied to the study of human behaviour due to the complexity of human nature that is contrary to the order and regularity of the natural world. As Kushner (2017) reminds us, a qualitative researcher does not present data, but represents people, and their hopes, fears, aspirations and failures.

Equally, my epistemological framework has been shaped by my decision to research with children. However, studies from an adult perspective such as this include adult bias and assumptions about what children think (Harcourt and Sargeant, 2011). Whilst mindful of the challenges, I believe it is imperative to develop new shared understandings about children and childhood, as listening to children's views and opinions will help us learn more about them: this knowledge is something that can be created through our interactions with them (Tisdall *et al*., 2009).

Furthermore, in terms of my own positionality and professional actions, I am mindful of the consequences of professional reform, and how these struggles are individualized as teachers find their values challenged or displaced by the "terrors of performativity" (Ball, 2003, p. 215). These facets of human experience (Kushner, 2017), the constraints on ambitions, the tension between agency and structure and

the clash of interests of diverse groups in an organisation have democratic implications. The research aims to explore teachers and students' views of the beliefs and practices of high-expectation teachers, to offer greater insight into teaching beliefs and strategies that are perceived as creating a culture of high expectation, and to explore the barriers to creating a culture of high expectation. Hence, the narrowest definitions of teaching as potentially observable interaction with students will be avoided (Evans, 2011).

The interpretivist paradigm predominantly uses qualitative methods (Silverman, 2000). Similarly, Willis (2007) asserts that interpretivists tend to favour these qualitative methods, giving the examples of case study and ethnography specifically, as qualitative approaches often give rich reports that are necessary for interpretivists to fully understand contexts. Thomas (2003) maintains that qualitative methods are usually supported by interpretivists, because this paradigm portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing. My own position is that social actors construct meanings about their lives and negotiate these meanings in their social practices. Human action cannot be separated from meaning making. My role is to make sense of these interpretations, although this activity will also be mediated by my own frame of reference, which has been shaped by my experiential learning, my values and through my reading of the research literature (Scott, 2017).

Intervention studies in the teacher expectation field have focussed on a range of methodologies. Studies linking teacher expectation to student achievement, such as Rubie-Davies *et al*., (2015) and Hattie (2009), have used the quantitative methods of randomised control trials and meta-analysis to analyse the impact of teacher expectation on students' work. As my present study is focussed on teacher and student perceptions of teacher expectation in my workplace, a similarly quantitative approach would not be appropriate, as my aim is to record views rather than measure and quantify. I would also posit that this decision is associated with my own epistemological value position: I see the field of study as the meaningful actions of social actors and the social construction of reality (Scott, 2017).

Lapan, Quartaroli and Kiemer (2012) refer to the etymology of the terms 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' research in order to define them, explaining that the 'qualitative' implies observation, whereas 'quantitative' implies an amount. However, they also caution against simplistic dichotomies, ascertaining that for qualitative researchers, reality is context, as well as time, specific. Therefore, to examine the phenomena of

teacher expectation in my workplace, a case study approach will assist in portraying the 'realities' of the particular situation. Case study research in education is primarily qualitative, although case studies may make use of quantitative techniques in addition to, or instead of, qualitative methods (Tight, 2017). Consequently I believe a qualitative approach is appropriate in my own study as it allows me to explore the participants' experience of the phenomena in depth.

I began my journey through this research through an exploration of the literature around what is defined as a teacher with high expectations. I have defined what is meant by 'high expectations' from the locations of government policy, professional regulation and performance management and notions of professional identity, in addition to the exploration of theoretical models. Specifically, this study will define how a 'high expectation' teacher is to be recognised through theoretical models and through notions of professional identity.

3.3 Methodology: Why case study?

Research conducted by Yin (1984, 2009) and Stake (1994, 1995, 2005) is often cited by researchers in support of the use of a qualitative case study methodology. The authors, however, have differing philosophical orientations, as Yin's work is written from a post-positivist perspective, and Stake's work from a constructivist point of view. Yin (1984, 2009) defines case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its context, relying on multiple sources of evidence and benefitting from the prior development of theoretical propositions. Stake (1995) defines case study as the study of the complexity of a single case in which the case has a clear boundary.

My own research is a case study design based on the methodology described by Stake (2005). It is focussed on one phenomenon, that is, the beliefs and practices of high expectation teachers, and I have selected one bounded case, the organisation in which I work, to illustrate the phenomenon. The case is specific, and bounded by time, location and policy context. This study is particularly suitable for a case study design because it is such a system (Merriam, 1998). According to Creswell (2002), the term bounded means that the case is separated out for research in terms of time, place, or some physical boundaries. In other words, it is possible to create limits around the object to be studied (Merriam, 1998).

This research is intended to emphasize uniqueness through the in-depth exploration of the participants' experiences. Kushner (2017) states that case study is a form of organisational analysis, as one possible way of thinking about any organisation is that it is a case. Within this bounded system are the relationships between people and events, and within those are differing perspectives. Kushner's (2017) definition is of particular relevance as the positions on what makes a 'high expectation' teacher are contradictory, and not universally agreed.

Kushner (2017) also comments on the importance of having an understanding of the organisation that is being researched, as the organisation is where democratic social contract is experienced: we relate to the state through its institutions, and organisations provide the context within which these interests play out. If the organisation can be understood in this way, case study can be seen as a democratic methodology for its capacity to legitimise difference and foster debate. These debates can be seen in the differing definitions of the beliefs and practices of high expectation teachers, as well as the "worlds of problems" that practitioners in this case study inhabit, in contrast to "worlds of solutions" inhabited by organisational leaders, and perhaps by policy-makers (Kushner, 2017, p.151).

My decision to use Stake's (2005) methodology is partially attributable to my philosophical orientation, as I believe that truth is relative and the result of perspective. The constructivist assumptions of Stake's (2005) methodology also acknowledge the value-laden nature of the work, in contrast to Yin's (2009) assumptions that the researcher is neutral, and that bias can be controlled. Furthermore, the goal of my own research is understanding, with interpretation as the primary method (Stake, 2005), in contrast with Yin's (2009) requirement for the use of a conceptual framework to portray a hypothesized cause-and-effect relationship.

Yin (2009) categorises case studies in terms of their outcomes: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory, although Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013) suggest that these categorisations, along with their concepts of validity, may be too simplistic for educational settings. Merriam (1988) describes three types of case studies in accordance to Yin's (1984) classifications: particularistic, descriptive and heuristic, and bases these on the intent of the research. I would locate my research as descriptive, as I focus on the thick description (Geertz, 1973) of the aspect of the case and phenomenon I am studying; following Yin's definition, this case study could also be defined as descriptive as it is used to describe a phenomenon and the

real-life context in which it occurs. However, as Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013) postulate, the various models of case studies may overlap substantially, so it may be difficult to separate these.

Stake (1995) chooses to divide case study into two main forms, intrinsic – which attempts to capture the case in its entirety – and instrumental, which focuses on an action, concern or issue of the case. Following Stake's definition, this research is an instrumental case study as it is concerned with a key focus of the case, *i.e*. views on teacher expectations, and the case study is instrumental in developing a deeper understanding of this concept. The case study is bounded by time, location and the policy context.

Yin (2009) suggests that a case study can act as a pilot to generate hypotheses that lead to other forms of research. However, Adelman *et al*., (1980) argue that case study as a methodology can exist in its own right and caution against using it as a preliminary to further study. In my own study, the case study may help me to investigate "real-world problems" (Harrison and Callan, 2013, p.1) revealed in the case study investigation.

My original research design of blended case study and action research cycles (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier, 2012) appealed to me partially because of Dewey's (1916) assertion that active participation is essential to good learning. However, Adelman *et al.*, (1980) define case study as beginning in the world of action and contributing to it, as insights from a case study may be directly interpreted and put to use. This definition is particularly powerful for me as I had previously misunderstood case study to be a passive process in comparison to an action research approach. Bassey (1999) similarly suggests that all educational research is defined by improving action through theoretical understanding.

3.4 Criticisms of case study: issues of generalisability, validity and reliability

Within qualitative research, the concepts of validity, reliability and objectivity can be deemed problematic and may, instead, be replaced with credibility, dependability and confirmability (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). As I see meaning as socially constructed and bound by context, it is worth reflecting on how I have understood the concept of validity. My construction of reality is inevitably an interpretation, as I

am seeking to construct what events and behaviours mean to the people engaged in them (Maxwell, 1992).

The context of my research is a mixed gender comprehensive school, wherein students are taught in mixed ability grouping or grouping based on attainment, dependent on subject and key stage. Within this context, my research seeks to explore ways teachers aim to build an inclusive learning environment and the methods used to develop strategies that do not rely on pre-determined ability labelling, and to gain a deeper understanding of teacher and student views of teacher expectation, including an exploration of the barriers to creating a culture of high expectation.

With the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of teacher and student perceptions on the concept of teacher expectations and possible barriers to this, I conducted a case study to completely explore the concept in this context as well as understand the possible ways of building an inclusive learning environment. Although I believe that case study is an apposite methodology for answering my research questions, I am mindful that the methodology can be criticised for several weaknesses. These weaknesses include criticisms that case studies are not replicable and they may not be representative or generalizable (Wellington, 2015). Moreover, case studies also have the potential for bias, including potential sources of bias such as the researcher's affinity with certain kinds of people, theories and concepts, value preferences and personal qualities (Shaughnessy *et al*., 2003).

Stake (1995) comments that a case is a complex entity operating within a number of contexts. One strength of case study is its attention to the subtlety and complexity of the case and its potential to capture richness and uniqueness (Simons, 1996). This strength leads to the corresponding disadvantage that it is difficult to generalise from a specific case (Nisbett and Watt, 1984; Wellington, 2015). I agree with Simons (1996) that the tension between the study of the unique and the need to generalise is necessary to reveal the unique and the universal as well as the unity in that understanding.

Although case studies are sometimes criticised for having limited generalisability (Yin, 2009), Stake (1985) suggests that intrinsic case study can be seen as a small step forward toward generalisation. Stenhouse (1980) distinguishes between predictive and retrospective generalisation: predictive generalisation arises from the study of samples and is similar to Yin's (1994) statistical generalisation;

retrospective generalisation can arise from the analysis of case studies and is similar to Yin's (1994) analytic generalisation. According to Stenhouse (1980), analytic generalisation seeks to strengthen rather than supersede teachers' classroom judgements. Yin (2009) observes that external validity can be addressed by the careful use of theory in single-case studies, arguing that analytic generalisation is the appropriate method for generating theory from a case study.

Ruddin (2006) questions if generalisation is an appropriate aim for a case study at all. Case studies can be part of a greater pool of data, contributing to the expansion and generalisation of theory (Stake, 1985). My own small-scale research does, therefore, not offer transferability but aims to reveal a greater understanding of the phenomenon within this context. Thomas (2010) suggests that there are universals present in each case study, as they carry exemplary knowledge of a wider phenomenon. We can gain universal understanding from single case studies and apply them to our own situation (Simons, 2015). Hence, knowledge gained from my own case study may be of benefit to other educationalists despite their differing contexts.

In terms of validity, Maxwell (1992) suggests that 'understanding' is a more suitable term than validity for qualitative research. Since I belong to the world I am observing, and my own epistemological assumptions elucidate that human action cannot be separated from meaning-making (Scott, 2017), I cannot be objective. In my own research, I have aimed instead for fidelity (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995), trying to be as honest as possible to the self-reporting of the researched. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that rigour can be achieved by auditing trails of evidence, and Yin (2009) similarly suggests that one method of improving credibility could be to provide a chain of evidence, so that the steps of the case study, from inception to research questions, design, data sources, instrumentation, data and conclusions, are abundantly clear. I have aimed to achieve this throughout my own study, including documenting raw data and keeping records of data analysis in addition to detailed process notes.

In my research design, I originally aimed for methodological triangulation between methods as a check on credibility, in the understanding that as my case study is of a complex phenomenon, use of multiple data sources may be particularly useful (Mertens, 2012). However, triangulation can be criticised for the positivistic notion that multiple data sources are superior to a single data source (Silverman, 1985). Furthermore, multiple data sources do not necessarily ensure consistency (Patton,

1980). I would suggest that although useful, the concept of triangulation would presume that there is only one correct final position, and this may not necessarily be the case. Conversely, lack of convergence may generate additional questions, possibly making findings more authentic (Seale, 1999).

One further way I have aimed to achieve authenticity is through the use of semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Silverman (2000) argues that these methods enable participants to demonstrate their unique way of looking at the world. One possible disadvantage to this approach in my study is a bias in respondents giving 'acceptable' answers to questions; to try and alleviate this risk, I remained aware of the potentially distorting effects of power in an interview, regarding the interviews as a gift (Limerick *et al.,* 1996), and that participants have the power to withhold information.

The bounded system in my own case study is my workplace. This choice is partially a practical one in terms of ease of access to research participants. Additionally, as a teacher-researcher, I undoubtedly had a better initial understanding of the subtleties between situations and events and could, therefore, assess the implications of following particular avenues of enquiry (Griffiths, 1985). This heightened familiarity may, however, have led me to leave certain assumptions unchallenged (Mercer, 2007).

3.5 Case study in the context of the 'what-works' agenda

Punch (2009) claims that there is an increased interest in evidence-informed practice in education, and teachers are being encouraged to develop evidence-informed policies and programmes. Punch (2009, p.42) states that there is now a better understanding of the value of small-scale studies for their contribution to knowledge, insight and professional practice and that "small-scale projects can also make important contributions to teachers' professional development". However, the current government has a preference for particular methodologies and methods in educational research (Harrison and McCaig, 2017); Goldacre's (2013) government-commissioned report 'Building Evidence into Education' is an example of this, proposing randomised control trials (seen as the 'gold-standard' of educational research) as a means of testing educational interventions. This debate has particular relevance to this study as questions asked in the study are based on

Rubie-Davies *et al.*,'s (2015) RCT, in which practices utilised by high-expectation teachers are modelled, and students' achievements are subsequently measured.

Harrison and McCaig (2017) suggest that this 'what works' agenda, which is currently aligned with the use of RCTs (Norwich and Koutsouris, 2018) in evidence-based practice can be seen as a moral obligation but is also seen as technocratic. To its critics, it is reductionist, simplistic, philosophically weak and unethical (Biesta, 2007, 2010). Francis *et al.*, (2017) who propose that the discourse of 'scientific truth' inherent in this agenda means that evidence can be negated or dismissed: the authors see RCTs as one valid methodological approach among many and, as such, choose to specifically exploit the symbolic power of the RCT design as a rhetorical tool.

Biesta (2007) critiques evidence-based practice as professional action, as it asks from research that it provides evidence about the effectiveness of interventions. This relies on a causal model of professional action, despite the fact that education can be seen as an open, moral and recursive system (Biesta, 2007). Biesta (2007) suggests that rather than interventions, we should think of the activities of teachers as opportunities for students to respond and to learn something from their responses. Professional judgments in education are ultimately value judgments, not simply technical judgments. These ideas are applied to my own study through my epistemological position and my research questions, as I explore the views of both teachers and students, rather than focussing on connecting teacher expectation interventions to student achievement.

Eacott (2017) similarly suggests that there are traces of Taylorism in the 'what works' agenda, in terms of the pursuit of the one right method, and the generative principle of perpetual improvement. Hattie's (2009) mega-analysis (Terhart, 2011), 'Visible Learning', and the presence of effect sizes meant that school administrators could make decisions with efficiency and investment in mind (Eacott, 2017). However, Koutsouris and Norwich (2018) assert that in relation to real-world interventions, effect sizes do not sufficiently explore the contextual factors that might serve as barriers of implementation, casting doubt on whether an intervention can be successfully replicated in a different context, or effectively revised.

Moreover, Kvernbekk (2016) also reminds us that the terms 'works' and 'intervention' are causal, which in itself is contentious in education as outlined in Biesta's (2007) argument. My own position is not that we should abandon the

pursuit of ‘what works’ but that we should not adopt any one position uncritically. This stance is reflected by Kvernbekk (2016) who suggests that since the world is unpredictable, causality is not deterministic. Additionally, the author asserts that evidence can be best summed up as support. Contextual factors are paramount: application of research evidence in the teacher’s own context is for the practitioner to decide, using their knowledge, thinking and professional judgement (Kvernbekk, 2016).

3.6 Research methods

Before any field work could commence, ethical approval was required from the university. I applied to the Department of Education at UWE as per the BERA guidelines (BERA, 2018). These guidelines create a framework within which all educational research should be conducted, guiding researchers on their conduct in relation to their responsibilities to participants, sponsors of research and to the community of educational researchers. Study approval was granted on the condition that consideration was given to communication with potential participants about: a) the impact of involvement or non-involvement in the research on the student’s studies and any anxieties that could arise from students remaining outside the actively engaged group; b) the process of using pseudonyms: staff and students needed to be assured of the efficacy of the process of generating and using pseudonymous data; c) students needed to be assured that critical responses to individual sessions (and therefore teachers) would not be shared amongst staff, and that participants’ relationships with me would not put at risk during the conduct of the research. I also needed to consider further how participants' emotional and psychological well-being was to be safeguarded.

Revisiting and amending these aspects of the documentation led to the committee granting full ethical approval to proceed with the study (see Appendix A). These amendments were incorporated into topic guides and participant information sheets (see Appendices F, G, H, J and L).

i) Questionnaire, focus group and interview design and rationale

Questions for all stages of the data gathering were designed to answer the research questions. These were based on the beliefs and practices of high-expectation teachers, as defined by Rubie-Davies (Rubie-Davies *et al.*, 2015; Rubie-Davies, 2015). Following exploration of these beliefs and practices in chapter 2.7 of the literature review, I grouped these practices into four main areas: class climate, grouping, goal setting and teacher and student expectations of their achievement. As the context of Rubie-Davies' (Rubie-Davies *et al.*, 2010; Rubie-Davies, 2015) research is in New Zealand, my questions were also based on the work of Francis *et al*., (2017), as their research on grouping in English secondary schools is the most current in the field. However, I am mindful of the contradictory positions on what makes a 'high expectation teacher'. As Kushner (2017) comments, all organisations are characterised by struggle for the control of meaning and for the autonomy of the practitioner. Therefore, respondents were also asked about the perceived barriers to creating a culture of high expectation. Questions asked to students, and the rationale for the same, are provided in Appendix B and C. Questions asked to teachers, and the rationale for the same, are provided in Appendix D and E.

ii) Questionnaires

The first phase of data collection for the instrumental case study began with questionnaires administered to both students and staff. As Tymms (2012) suggests, questionnaires can be seen as a form of interviewing. The benefits of a questionnaire method at this stage were that responses to the questionnaires enabled a broader understanding of teacher and student views of teacher expectation within this context, partially as questions were both open-ended and closed. Open-ended questions, in particular, were effective at generating large amounts of data and for exploration (Bailey, 1994) – in this case, for gathering a wide range of views on teacher expectation. One complication with open-ended questions in questionnaires is that questions may be interpreted differently by different people, and it is not possible to question respondents further to find out what they mean by particular responses (Tymms, 2012). I adhered to the advice of Denscombe (2014) who warns that too long a questionnaire can lead to respondent

fatigue, and that a researcher needs to make the topic interesting and motivating to reduce the risk of respondents failing to complete the questionnaire.

At the end of the questionnaire, students and teachers were invited to explore their thoughts further in a focus group or in an interview; the reasons for these differing methods are explained below. In this phase of data collection, the questions were similar to those asked in the questionnaire; however, the semi-structured format of both the focus groups and interviews allowed participants to be more expansive in their responses (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 2005), which allowed me to ask follow-up questions for clarification or to explore ideas in more detail. Additionally, the format also allowed participants to explore any aspects of the research questions I may have missed. The student focus group topic guide is provided in Appendix F, and the teacher interview topic guide is provided in Appendix G

The questionnaire was distributed online using Bristol Online Surveys for ease of development, deployment and analysis, and because the survey tool is fully compliant with UK Data Protection laws. All Year 9 students were invited to participate in the study; out of a total of approximately 200 students, 33 responses were recorded. All members of staff were invited to participate, and out of a total of 70, 13 responses were recorded.

iii) Focus groups

In order to understand the complexities of the case, and to provide a greater depth of understanding and insight, I also worked on comprehending student views of teacher expectation within focus groups. Although focus groups can be seen as little more than formal instances of everyday speech acts (Bakhtin, Emerson and Holquist,1986), the choice of focus groups rather than individual interviews in this case was to encourage participants to speak out in their own words, as well as to encourage the less literate participants (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018).

On a practical level, focus groups are efficient, in that they generate quantities of material from relatively large numbers of people at a time. They may produce data that results in powerful interpretive insights as ‘real-world’ problems cannot be solved by individuals alone. They may also facilitate the exploration of shared knowledge and can capitalise on the richness and complexity of group dynamics (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 2005). Group dynamics, however, were also

considered to ensure that everyone's voice is heard (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). Despite these measures, I am aware that the researcher is often in an asymmetric position of power with regard to the participants, particularly as some of the participants are students. In addition, I had also set the agenda for the research. I aimed to use strategies, outlined in the ethics section below, to try to reduce power differentials, particularly in terms of establishing rapport and trust.

Four student focus groups were formed in total, and 11 responses were recorded in both written and audio form, then transcribed.

iv) Interviews

Teacher interviews were conducted on an individual basis to enable me to pay full attention to each interviewee. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and questions were semi-structured to lead to greater standardisation of questions while retaining flexibility. Furthermore, I was mindful of the demands I was making on the respondents in terms of their time, which reduced my possibilities for extensive engagement with participants. However, the semi-structured interview schedule may have created limited opportunities for respondents to express themselves as they would in a conversation, thereby closing possible avenues of exploration (Schensul, 2012). Findings from questionnaires, focus groups and interviews may have helped to authenticate the data, and to reinforce the legitimacy of the conclusions drawn (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier, 2013), although I am mindful that there is no one true answer to the questions asked of participants. Furthermore, there may be multiple meanings to a situation or activity, represented by what people say to the researcher (Gubrium, 1997). I would suggest that responses given in the interview are actively constructed narratives, themselves demanding analysis (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995), as explored in chapters 4 and 5.

v) Sampling

In terms of student recruitment to the study, all Year 9 students were invited to respond to the questionnaire and participate in the subsequent focus-group discussions. This was a year group that I did not teach, therefore partially alleviating the potential overlap in my dual role as teacher and researcher (Roberts and Allen,

2015). I am, however, the parent of one of the students in the year group and, therefore, know several of the students in a personal capacity. Although this had the potential to cause complications, these relationships may have been beneficial in terms of redressing power imbalances.

In terms of the students who gave their consent to participate, the sample consists of representation from male and female students, with a range of levels in prior academic attainment. More female students chose to participate in the focus groups, although male students were more equally represented in questionnaire responses. The students in the study are predominately of white British heritage, which reflects the lack of ethnic diversity in the student body as a whole. Using the Pupil Premium measure as an indicator of disadvantage, students from this background are included, but are slightly under-represented. This may be because parents or carers were not willing for their children to be involved in the research project, that the ethical process was off-putting, parents or carers have literacy issues, or that parents and carers had more important and pressing demands in their own lives (Fletcher and Hunter, 2003). Consequently, findings may not fully represent the views of students who are most at risk of experiencing low teacher expectation.

In terms of staff responses, the sample consists of members of staff who teach students in attainments sets and in mixed attainment groupings. Both male and female staff are represented, as are members of staff with varying degrees of experience and responsibilities. Names were replaced with aliases that were randomly generated online. All members of staff were invited to participate in both the questionnaire and interview stage of the research. Invitations were given verbally in a staff teaching and learning briefing and followed up via email. The online questionnaire also included an option for interested members of staff to discuss the topic further during interviews. The research design planned for the data collection to begin in the summer term when, in this context, teaching commitments are reduced; but, conversely, the number of responses may have been lower than expected as teachers were experiencing many disparate demands on their time at this point in the academic year. The respondents may also be biased as they may have a particular interest in the topic being researched or feel an affinity to myself as a researcher. I will explore issues of imbalances of power and my own positionality as a researcher further into this chapter.

To be discussed further in the critical reflections on the research study in chapter 6.6, McNiff and Whitehead (2006) refer to this type of sampling as convenience sampling, as the sample was taken from those to whom I had the easiest access. As such, the sample does not seek to generalize to the wider population. Furthermore, representation cannot be claimed as volunteers may be well intentioned but may not necessarily represent the wider population. Interview and focus-group participants were asked why they were interested in participating in the research as a warm-up question, and most expressed a specific enthusiasm for the research topic.

Table 1: Participants and their contexts

Source (anonymised using online random name generator, reflecting gender and ethnicity)	**Context of participants**
Abbie (experienced middle leader)	Teaches in attainment groupings
Amelia (experienced classroom teacher)	Teaches in both attainment groupings and mixed attainment groupings
Caitlin, Hannah and Sophie (students)	Middle attaining students
Clarissa (experienced classroom teacher)	Teaches in attainment groupings
Daniella (mid-career senior leader)	Teaches in attainment groupings
Georgia and Maddie (students)	Higher attaining students
Hayley (experienced classroom teacher)	Teaches in attainment groupings
Joshua (early career middle leader)	Teaches in attainment groupings
Lewis, Jordan and Sol (students)	Prior lower-attaining students

Rosa (experienced classroom teacher)	Teaches in mixed attainment groupings
Ruby, Leo and Darcy (students)	Middle-attaining students
Teacher questionnaire	Sample drawn from teachers who teach in attainment groupings and mixed attainment groupings
Student questionnaire	Sample drawn from a range of higher, middle and previously lower attaining students

3.7 Problematising the use of lesson observation

Case studies are methodologically eclectic but often use observation as a tool for data collection (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). The decision not to use lesson observation as a tool for data collection for my own case study was a deliberate one, and one specific to the recent history of the workplace following an Ofsted judgement of 'special measures', as described in chapter 1.2.

Ball (2003) suggests that teachers are constantly judged in different ways within a flow of changing demands, claiming that we become unsure of whether we are doing enough and that we constantly strive to improve and to be excellent. Yet, it is not very clear what is expected at all. Contrarily, Pring (2012) believes that teaching should be a collaborative process, an engagement with learners in which teachers come to know and adjust to the learners' capacities, strengths, weaknesses and aspirations. The level of professional expertise described by Pring (2012) requires critical reflection on practice and practitioner-based classroom research.

O'Leary (2014) refers to the use of lesson study as one possible alternative to graded lesson observation. In use in Japan and China since the early 1900s, lesson study is growing in popularity in Western countries as a means of improving teaching techniques and student progress (Cajkler *et al.,* 2013), in addition to redressing the imbalance in the agency of the teacher. The popularity of lesson study in the West has risen partially due to Stigler and Hibbert's (1999) research into the achievement gaps in mathematics and science between American students

and their international counterparts. High-quality mathematics teaching in Japan was attributed to the practice of lesson study, and the practice began to be adopted by educators globally (Xu and Pedder, 2015).

The process involves a group of teachers collaboratively planning, teaching, observing and analysing learning and teaching in 'research lessons'. They then record their findings. Over a cycle of research lessons, teachers may innovate or refine a pedagogical approach that will improve students' learning and which will be shared with others. According to Cheng and Lo (2003), this type of collaborative action research approach to observation aims to improve the effectiveness of student learning by enhancing the professional competence of teachers through a joint construction of pedagogical content.

Despite the fact that the lesson study process is one that is expected to produce small, incremental improvements over long periods of time (Stigler and Herbert, 1999), research evidence attesting to the benefits of using lesson study is growing (Cajkler *et al.*, 2013). Part of the appeal of the lesson study approach is that it appears deceptively simple (Dudley, 2015). This, however, can be somewhat disadvantageous as the teaching profession has sometimes been encouraged to innovate simply for the sake of innovation. Furthermore, as the process has been adapted from Japan and China, where the tradition of public teaching is embedded into culture, it may be problematic for Western teachers who tend to teach in isolation (Dudley, 2015).

The structure of lesson study appeals to me as it prioritises development over surveillance. The underlying values in our current education system favour quantitative, measurable data. Dudley (2012) finds that lesson study is a popular, powerful and replicable process for innovating, developing and transferring pedagogic practice. Furthermore, Dudley (2012) suggests that lesson study focuses the teachers' attention on the effectiveness of the lesson, not on the effectiveness of the teacher. Thus, teachers can abandon, as Ball (2003) describes, the new vocabulary of performance and, instead, focus on teacher learning through collaborative, classroom-based, and practice-focused enquiry.

The tension between the careful creation and facilitation of a workplace culture of professional autonomy and using lesson observation as a data collection tool seemed problematic to me. The lesson study model is a systematic approach to using and sharing research, and the culture of practice-based approaches is one of

equality, faithful observation, openness to feedback, reciprocal vulnerability and multiple sources of evidence, and one I decided not to jeopardise for the sake of my own research project.

My passion for the school-wide lesson study project I facilitate may also explain my reluctance to change my initial research design. The process of lesson study can be seen as a form of action research, in that it is a critical, self-reflective practice and refers to people becoming aware of and making public their process of learning with others (McNiff, 2013). The cycle of action research, as with lesson study, begins with a research question and ends by stating an engagement with the research question. I needed to reflect on the suitability of the research design in answering the research questions in this case study rather than basing the research design on my own previous research experience.

3.8 Why use thematic and Bourdieusian analysis?

Richardson (1994, p.936) refers to writing as a method of inquiry as “wet clay”; it is material that can be shaped. Furthermore, the author argues that rather than deploying different methods to ‘validate’ findings, we should instead aim for crystallization. The image of the crystal, combining symmetry with a variety of shapes, substances and transmutations, allows us to deconstruct what is meant by ‘validity’, as crystals can grow, change and alter. Richardson’s (1994) proposition provides an explanation for a deepened, more complex understanding of the beliefs and practices of high expectation teachers.

I chose to adopt the methods of the thematic and Bourdieusian analyses to analyse the collected data: this adjustment of my research design in light of my emergent understandings will be explored further in chapter 5. Some writers situate thematic analysis as an experiential approach, focusing on what participants think, feel and do. This approach is underpinned by an assumption that language reflects reality. Thematic analysis is also described as theoretically independent (Terry *et al.*, 2017). I would suggest that my own approach is more similar to the first definition, in that my own subjectivity is integral to the analytical process. The repeated engagement with the data I have described leads to the outcome of the analytical process and the strategies I used to aim for greater fidelity and rigour are focused on reflection and a thorough approach. Thematic analysis appealed to me as a

framework for organising and reporting my analytic observations, guided, but not fixed, by my research questions. I was also drawn by the ability to use thematic analysis to identify the patterns within and across the data according to the participants' lived experiences and to capture both manifest and latent meaning (Clarke and Braun, 2017).

Whilst considering these experiences, I decided that exploring the social concerns raised throughout this study through the theories of Bourdieu may be helpful in making sense of these wider issues of inequality and that exploring the data collected through this different lens would be illuminating. Richardson (1994) explains that as the researcher is aiming for crystallization, what we see depends on our angle of repose: we have a partial view of the topic. The paradox here is that we know more, and doubt what we know.

As Webb, Schirato and Danaher (2002) remind us, education is of particular importance to Bourdieu as it is the mechanism through which values and relations that make up social space are passed from one generation to the next. Bourdieu argues that the purpose of the school system was the production and maintenance of the elites; agents occupying dominant positions were deeply imbued with its practices and discourses (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

The French school system Bourdieu refers to in his writings is elitist and competitively structured; therefore, I would argue that Bourdieu's thinking tools are relevant in understanding the context of the English school system, as education in England is also highly stratified by social class. In England, there is an especially strong relationship between wealth and educational outcomes and between wealth and occupational outcomes (Jerrim and Macmillan, 2015). Those from the lowest socioeconomic backgrounds generally achieve the least in terms of educational outcomes, and those from the highest socio-economic backgrounds generally attain the highest educational outcomes (Clifton and Cook, 2012).

The barriers to enacting the practices of high-expectation teachers can be understood as a means of retrenching dominant power relations. Bourdieu builds on Marxist capital theory and applies it to the realm of culture, suggesting that sharing similar forms of culture with others helps create a sense of collective identity (Bourdieu, 1986). As certain forms of cultural capital are valued over others, this can further entrench social inequality. Cultural capital is the level of influence available through association with various cultures and accumulation of culturally

significant items which have value capital within a cultural field. Bourdieu (1986) explains the notion of cultural capital in three different states: the embodied state; the objectified state; and the institutionalized state. In the objectified state, cultural capital is evident in material objects such as paintings and sculptures. Cultural capital in this state can be transformed into economic capital. Cultural capital in an institutionalized state is the objectification of itself into various forms such as academic qualifications. This also allows a process of transaction in changing embodied cultural capital into economic capital, as a degree or other academic qualification may provide access to a highly paid profession (Bourdieu, 1994).

Habitus is a concept that expresses the way individuals develop attitudes and dispositions, and the way in which individuals engage in practices. In this way, habitus can be seen partially as the physical embodiment of cultural capital and is sometimes referred to by Bourdieu as 'a feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 1990). Habitus is extended to our taste for cultural objects, allowing us to navigate social environments. It is perhaps the most contested of Bourdieu's concepts, as it can be perceived as removing the element of choice from the human experience. However, for Bourdieu, this is not an absence of choice but wherein choices are influenced by social structures (Webb *et al.*, 2008).

Habitus can influence the actions you take and is generated by your place in the social structure. By internalizing this, aspirations and practices are developed. Bourdieu suggests that the reproduction of the social structure results from individuals' habitus. This concept is, therefore, connected to an individual's sense of culture and history and how values are assimilated (Bourdieu, 1994). Therefore, habitus can be understood as the values and dispositions that transcend generations and context. Individuals reproduce these values within the various fields in which they interact. Additionally, knowledge is constructed through habitus; as all individuals are disposed to certain attitudes, behaviours and values, habitus emerges where dispositions meet problems, choices or context (Webb *et al., 2*008). It is also a structure where it is systemically ordered rather than random or unpatterned, which designates a way of being (Bourdieu, 1990).

Thus, as Dumias (2002) argues, referencing capital without referring to habitus leaves Bourdieu's theoretical framework incomplete in its practical application. Furthermore, Bourdieu understood the social world as being divided into fields of practice, each with their own forms of capital and with hierarchies of 'value' within their contexts (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984; 1990; 1993). Habitus and field are relational

structures, representing objective and subjective realisations of the same social logic. Practices within a given situation are conditioned by expectations of the outcomes of a given course of action, which is, in turn, based on experience of past outcomes (Grenfell, 2014). These concepts will be explored in greater detail and in connection to the data collected throughout chapter 5.

3.9 Ethical considerations and reflections

Throughout the research process, I was, and will continue to be, guided by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018) ethical guidelines. Ethics can be defined as the application of moral principles to prevent "harming or wronging others, to promote the good, to be respectful and to be fair" (Seiber, 1993, p.14). Therefore, if ethical issues and concerns are underpinned throughout the research process, the "propensity towards a technicist one-size-fits-all and a once-and-for-all-time approach to ethical clearance" can be avoided (Sikes, 2013, p.519). Additionally, as the research topic is aligned with my own beliefs and values, and my philosophical position with regard to human nature and agency, my integrity has been maintained (Sikes, 2006). As with all qualitative research, however, the ethical considerations arising from this study were, and may continue to be, problematic.

i) Asymmetry of power

This case study explores the notion of teacher expectations from the students' perspective along with the teachers' perspective. The research has given me privileged knowledge of students and teachers, particularly because of my position within the institution that is being studied (Mercer, 2007). Consequently, there are issues of potential asymmetry of power over 'the researched'. It could be suggested that all social research intrudes in people's lives to some extent and "qualitative research often intrudes more" (Punch, 2009, p.50). Aldridge (2014), however, suggests that one advantage to the qualitative research method is that it may offer a degree of flexibility and sensitivity, particularly for more vulnerable participants. Consistent with this idea, I conducted the research with the concepts of flexibility and sensitivity at the forefront.

With regard to this potential asymmetry of power, BERA (2018) defines voluntary informed consent as the condition in which participants understand and agree to

their participation; therefore, consent is about respecting autonomy. To this end, Miller and Boulton (2007) propose a more informed approach to consent, as it requires a commitment both to the welfare of individuals and to the advancement of knowledge. Additionally, the students in this case study are agentic: Cocks (2006) reminds us that children are not passive recipients of adult social worlds and can assess, alter and contribute to the circumstances they find themselves in. Lee (1998), however, argues that this view is problematic as it may lead to a reliance on a perception of agency, failing to recognise the dependencies that may underlie mature performances of independence.

Furthermore, Punch (2002) suggests that in bracketing children and young people together, we may be at risk of ignoring diversity and that a fundamental aspect of human-centred research is to respect individuality. My perception of young people as competent social actors informed my approach, and I aimed to be respectful of their views at all times, listening attentively and actively and managing my own emotions where appropriate (Brockbank and McGill, 2012). Moreover, I aimed to embrace the uncertainty surrounding issues of dependence and independence (Lee, 1998), regarding all participants as individuals, and being open and vigilant to their human complexities.

ii) Issues surrounding informed consent

In their research, David, Edwards and Alldred (2001) explain that informed consent is a question of enabling children to make informed decisions; moreover, they warn of the potential asymmetry of power inherent in the context of the classroom as participation can also become just another form of schoolwork. I followed the guidance of Roberts and Allen (2015), who suggest putting strategies into place to avoid this, advising students that research participation (or abstention) will not affect their grades. Of course, the power imbalance that exists between teachers and students may have meant that students still felt their competence to refuse was impaired (Clark and McCann, 2005). This was certainly a concern during the collection of my own data, despite putting measures in place to help alleviate this. These measures included potential student participants being given an information sheet and, additionally, given the same information verbally in an assembly. The language used in the participant information sheets and consent forms were aimed to be understandable and clear for all parties involved (Punch, 2002) and to

acknowledge the value of all voices who wished to contribute to the research project. I followed the advice of Harcourt and Sargeant (2011) who remind us of the importance of considering Vygotsky's (1962) notion of intersubjectivity: the language used to introduce and explain the research project must be situated within the child's sphere of understandings. The student participant information sheet can be found in Appendix H and the student consent form in Appendix I.

As the students in this study are under 18, participant information sheets and consent forms were emailed to all parents and carers along with the students themselves. I had planned for all questionnaires to be emailed via my university email account, as opposed to my work email account, with the aim of further decoupling my role as teacher and researcher. The parent and carer participation information sheet can be found in Appendix J and the parent and carer consent form in Appendix K. However, with the imminent introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) laws, my workplace data protection team were reluctant to release the email addresses of parents and carers. As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) remind us, in many cases, access to research participants is guarded by gatekeepers, and despite considering how access would be possible, I had not anticipated the impact of a change in GDPR laws. Therefore, I made initial contact with potential participants through my workplace address, asking permission to contact parents and carers via my university account. This may have reduced the number of respondents in the request for access to participants, as consent was now required at several stages of the process. The relevant entry in my research diary is illuminating in reference to this development, clearly describing my frustration at what I perceived to be a barrier to a more representative sample for the research. Research conducted using passive consent procedures yield participation rates that exceed those of research projects that rely on active consent from parents (Range *et al.,* 2001). Had I followed passive consent approaches, the study may have resulted in a more representative sample. However, I am mindful that active consent approaches are more ethically appropriate.

The participant information sheet was also set as the first page of the online questionnaire. This meant participants were given sufficient information so that they could make a more informed decision as to whether they wanted to participate, including their right to withdraw from the research study (BERA, 2018). I had also included a deadline for making this decision to reduce the potential of participants withdrawing after data had been collected. This could have been particularly

problematic for disentangling contributions to focus group discussions (Vaughn, Schumm and Singugab, 1996). No students exercised their right to withdraw subsequent to focus group discussions, although one student decided to withdraw prior to them, giving the reason that they had changed their mind about participation in the case study research.

Hill (2005) explains that children should make informed choices about agreeing or refusing to participate; opting out and determining the boundaries of confidentiality and contributing ideas to research agendas and processes. This includes explaining the research in a comprehensible fashion, and with guarantee of no negative repercussion if students refuse to participate, which also applies to online surveys (Roberts and Allen, 2015). The online survey, therefore, included an option for interested students to discuss the topic further in focus groups.

iii) Issues surrounding conducting research with children

I considered the potential 'opportunity cost' to students through loss of curriculum time and the issue of reciprocity. Punch (2009) suggests we consider what each party will gain from participating in the study. Furthermore, Roberts and Allen (2015) advise that meeting our students' educational needs should supersede our own research needs. To help alleviate the opportunity cost, student questionnaires and the subsequent focus groups were conducted when other students were involved in administrative tasks. From the students' point of view, the openness in their responses may have been a testament to the provision of a space where they felt they were listened to. As Roberts, Jacob and Parrott (2008) assert, young people's resilience can be reinforced by their sense of security, a recognition of self-worth and the experience of control over one's own immediate environment.

It is also imperative that the students' perspectives were accurately conveyed. Punch (2002) argues that there have been major changes in the way research with children has been construed and approached, leading to a greater concern with children's perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, view and opinions. This includes the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990), wherein children have the right to have their views heard and the right to freedom of thought. The UNCRC resonates with a sociology of childhood (Mayall, 2002) and childhood studies

(Smith, 2007) where children are seen as social actors (Wyness, 2000) who can contribute to society with valid opinions as capable citizens (Neale, 2004).

Punch (2002) suggests that research involving children differs from that of research involving adults, and research issues such as developing rapport, not imposing the researcher's views, the research context as well as the clarity of questions need to be considered, along with the more frequently addressed issue of children's vulnerability to unequal power relationships. It could be suggested that developing rapport with students is one way of helping mitigate these power imbalances (Oakley, 1981; Finch, 1984). In my initial invitation to students to be involved in the study, I aimed to stimulate thinking and discussion about the research topic of teacher expectations as well as helping to build rapport by generating enthusiasm (David *et al*., 2001). My position as an insider researcher may have also been helpful here as although I did not teach any of the participants, I am widely known in the school, and this sense of familiarity may have supported the relationships developed.

As in the participant information sheet, focus group questions were adapted in terms of the language used, to ensure they were appropriate for the students' ages and to their level of understanding, such as explaining what I meant by barriers to learning (Punch, 2002). I ensured that I took time to develop a rapport with the group and to respond to any questions, as well as to make any clarifications (Oakley, 1981; Finch, 1984; Rapley, 2007).This mainly took the form of informal conversations before the questions began, wherein I introduced myself and offered students the opportunity to do the same. I explained that the aim of the research was to explore teacher and student views on teacher expectations and to explore possible ways of building a learning environment that helps all students achieve their best. Additionally, I explained to the students that it would be extremely helpful if they could tell me about their experiences in the classroom and the impact of those on their learning to help me understand the topic better. I made it clear that I would ask students some questions to help them along with this but reminded them that there are no right or wrong answers. Students were reminded that they did not have to talk about any issues they find difficult or upsetting, and ground rules were set to protect their wellbeing, such as the importance of listening, adhering to an atmosphere of mutual respect, and the importance of equal contribution (Punch, 2002). Specifically, as there was a risk that the topic of teacher expectation may cause distress on behalf of the student, questions asked of the students at each

stage of the research process were carefully worded to try to alleviate this risk. Moreover, students were also reminded of their access to in-school support services, should they be required.

During the discussion, I noted and adopted the language the students used to describe their experiences with the aim of building confidence and trust (Harcourt and Sargeant, 2011). I found this to be of particular importance when students were talking about experiences they had found challenging, such as when describing their relationships with teachers who they felt did not understand them or the ways that their learning was sometimes disrupted by their peers, such as the phrase "messing around" to refer to students being off-task in lessons. I considered different strategies that allowed the discussion to flow but also gave a chance for quieter students to contribute, such as occasionally asking the students questions one after the other in a circle. I noted when the students might be speaking from the perspective of norms and expectations and tried to get beyond the socially desirable answers (Rinaldi, 2006). I found the most effective strategy for this was to remind them of the ground rules that we established at the outset of the conversation, including the fact that any and all answers were acceptable (Alderson, 1995).

Of particular importance to this study is the transitional status of adolescents, which may raise complex issues of power, ethics and status (McDowell, 2001). Therefore, I was sensitive to inequalities that the students might be facing and considered what might make some students uncomfortable. This seemed to be of particular relevance when discussing the school's grouping practices and the students' positions within those practices. I monitored responses closely at this point, being careful that students did not attribute their self-worth to their academic grouping. Although students made their feelings clear verbally, I was also mindful of their body language and attentive to changes in terms of defensive behaviours or if students became quieter at certain points during the conversation (Brockbank and McGill, 2012). Establishing ground rules at the outset and attentive listening meant I took care that this discussion did not raise sensitive issues, particularly as the sample was drawn from a range of previous higher and lower attaining students. Ultimately, these empathic approaches seemed to emphasise the resilience of the participants rather than their susceptibility (Aldridge, 2014).

During the focus group discussions, I was particularly surprised by the openness, volubility and level of reflection of many of the participants. This openness may be due to the level of rapport I have with the students as well as a consequence of the

relationships I have developed with many of them, not only as part of the research process but due to connections I have made through working and living within the school community and the wider community for many years. Rapley (2007) asserts that rapport is something that should be worked at; interviewers must work to establish a relaxed relationship, communicating trust, reassurance and even likeableness (Ackroyd and Hughes, 1992). Although some of the questionnaire responses were detailed and reflective, I noticed that the focus group responses in particular were incredibly rich in terms of the complexities discussed around the topic of teacher expectation. Interestingly, Harcourt and Sargeant (2011) suggest that when given opportunities to be heard, adults express surprise at the sophistication of responses provided by children, and this in turn may reinforce a hierarchy of expectation.

One difficulty I encountered, particularly as the research progressed, was to not lead the discussion even when I could see similarities with answers given by other respondents. I found it useful to remember the ethical process during these moments and to not begin to see the participants as data for my own use but individuals who were being given the opportunity to express their opinions (Heyl, 2001). Rapley (2007) comments that interviewing can be used as a way to enable previously hidden, or silenced, voices to speak, and I did consider that one of the reasons for the depth of candour during the focus group discussions was that schools rarely have the opportunity to collect and access authentic student voice (Smith and Wilson, 2002; Woods *et al*., 2019).

Hill *et al.*, (2006) suggest that one of the key reasons for children and young people being vulnerable and marginalised in society as a whole is the absence of their authentic voices in public discourses regarding childhood. Therefore, after focus group discussions were completed, I spoke to the students about how they felt during the interview and ensured that they were not upset; I also gave them the opportunity to ask any questions they may have had. I acknowledged the students' contributions by thanking them for their responses and ensured they knew how the findings from the focus group will be used. Participants may have appreciated the opportunity to express their opinions in a safe and non-judgmental environment, perhaps evident in their thanks to me at the end of our conversations.

I tried to consider how I may be influencing research conversations through my identity, language capacity and perceived power: one strategy I used to reflect on these issues was to keep a diary in which I recorded experiences that gave me

particular cause for reflection (Schensul, 2012). This was useful as while analysing the data, I could refer to my notes when I felt my own biases could unduly influence my interpretations and understanding whilst in the field. One example of reflections noted in my diary is reference to a section of a teacher interview I redacted, as it referred back to a conversation that had taken place before the formal interview began. Although the data was incredibly rich, I reflected that it would have been unethical to analyse, as it was unclear whether this was a private conversation or part of the research interview. A further example is my own feelings of unease when teachers and students discuss disruption to their lessons: I found this incredibly difficult to write about, but fidelity to the stories of the research participants had to remain paramount.

iv) Being an insider-researcher in an educational setting

Yandell (2019) comments on the relation between research and practice in terms of conceptualising what research is, and how it relates to the everyday work of teachers. One position is that teacher-researchers' central focus is on practice, and on what happens in classrooms (Eyres and Richmond, 1982). This arises from carefully theorised understanding; placing the study in a well-constructed theoretical framework is a means of constructing trustworthy research (Wellington, 2000). From this position, the teacher is expert, is envisaged as having agency, and is undertaking systematic attempts to reach a better understanding of classroom practice, and refine that practice (Yandell, 2019). A contradictory position is that teaching and research are distinct activities, and that educational practitioners researching educational practices in their own workplaces are vulnerable to bringing their unexamined interpretive frameworks to make sense of what they see (Dowling and Brown, 2010). My own position is more closely aligned to Yandell (2019, p. 437), in that I view educational research as entailing an attentiveness to the particular, and a struggle to "represent the specificity of moments of teaching and learning", in addition to seeing research as a celebration of teacher knowledge.

Biesta (2015) also comments on divided nature of educational research, between those who see educational research as an activity that is ultimately understood by cause-effect relationships, and those who see education as a human event of communication, meaning making and interpretation. The author suggests that

practising education cannot be done without judgement, as education can never be practised through fixed protocols: we are always dealing with unique and new situations for which we need to tailor our professional knowledge. A claim that practice only needs technological knowledge misunderstands the ontology, axiology and the praxeology of education (Biesta, 2015). Cain *et al*. (2019) suggest that the usefulness of research lies in its potential to improve the quality of schooling by informing practitioners' thinking, reflection and organisational learning, as a platform for teachers to engage in critical conversations (Earl and Timperley, 2009). The authors see research engagement as a continuum from superficial to deep engagement, which may include conducting research as a practitioner.

However, undertaking research as a teacher, particularly as an insider-researcher, can raise certain tensions and dilemmas. One benefit to being an insider-researcher is ease of access to data collection, although because of this, it can be hard to tell where research stops and the rest of life begins (Scott, 1985). As I am familiar with the context of the research, I understand the links between situations and events and can assess the implications of following particular avenues of enquiry (Griffiths, 1985). Atkins and Wallace (2012) comment that the pre-existing relationships between colleagues may mean respondents have greater trust in the researcher, offering the potential for gathering different data, as well as having insights and understandings into the culture of the organisation. Nevertheless, I am aware that my familiarity with the setting may have led to pre-conceived assumptions about the data and the studied phenomenon (Mercer, 2007), and a risk of presenting colleagues in an unrealistically favourable light (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

The pre-existing relationships between myself and my colleagues may also be evident in the richness of the data collected from both the questionnaires and the interviews. I reflected that it is likely that teachers do not often have the opportunity to discuss their own teaching practices and, particularly, to discuss the values that underlie the work that they do (Ball, 2010). Teachers seemed to enjoy talking about the beliefs and practices of high-expectation teachers, and there seemed to be a cathartic element in discussing the barriers that may be in place to achieving this. However, consciously or subconsciously, all participants may be saying what they think should be said rather than what they really believe or do in the classroom (Hammersley, 2013). I am mindful that personal identities are not unitary or fixed but formed through social interactions (Sikes, 2006), and that they are constructed out of the categories that people choose in order to explain themselves (MacLure,

1993). I am choosing to focus on the words of the participants and embrace the complexities and contradictions inherent within these despite this risk. Additionally, one of the challenges of educational research is that these acts of representation cannot claim to capture the views of the participants in their entirety as I am merely speaking for others (Yandell, 2019).

It is important to recognise that as an insider researcher, my positionality is problematic. I continued in my role within the workplace simultaneously to conducting my research, possibly making participants unwilling to share their thoughts freely for fear of being judged, and perhaps for fear of professional consequences (Shah, 2004). Consequently, I followed the suggestion of Stutchbury and Fox (2009) and clearly explained the purpose of the project and what is to be asked of the participants. Data collection took place in the summer term, when teaching commitments are reduced following school leaving dates for Years 11 and 13. However, the impact on time for busy teaching professionals still needed to be considered; and on reflection, I had underestimated the disparate demands on teachers' time during this part of the academic year.

I was also alert to the fact that as a senior leader and Director of Teaching and Learning, teaching staff may have acquiesced to be involved in the research. To help alleviate this concern, Miles and Huberman (1994) note the importance of providing complete information about what the study will involve, in addition to developing a relationship of honesty and trust. As discussed earlier in the chapter, all members of staff were invited to participate in both the questionnaire and the interview stage of the research. Invitations were given verbally in a staff teaching and learning briefing and followed up via email. The online questionnaire also included an option for interested members of staff to discuss the topic further during the interviews. The teacher participant information sheet can be found in Appendix L, and the teacher consent form in Appendix M.

There are also ethical considerations for myself as a researcher in my workplace. It may be ethically contentious to critique current teaching approaches: "work that challenges dominant notions and orthodoxies can be risky, career and identity wise, for those who engage in it" (Sikes, 2006, p.111). Sikes observes that "insider research is inherently sensitive" as "research is about finding things out and that knowledge is power" (Sikes, 2006, p.112). This has the potential to lead to distorted

or inaccurate findings. To help alleviate this risk, Sikes (2006) suggests that it is useful for researchers to ask themselves how they would feel if they or their children, family, friends or acquaintances were researched by them. However, benefits other than to the researcher may help to offset these potential issues; research which can inform practice is ethically defensible.

Additionally, the notion of a dichotomous insider/outsider positionality can be questioned as human beings cannot be easily categorised (Mercer, 2007), and each position has both advantages and disadvantages (Hammersley, 1993). For instance, the role of a teacher as researcher raises complexities as the dividing line between research data and professional data requires careful consideration. Punch (2009) cautions that data collected without consent on students' learning must not be used for research purposes. As a teacher-researcher, selective sampling or bias in the collection of this data are possible in my research. My position brings subjectivity and bias, although an insider's understanding of the research situation can enrich and deepen the research, including interpretation of its results. A vested interest in the outcomes of the research may influence the outcomes claimed: the 'positionality' of the researcher. Punch (2009) explains that the recognition and scrutiny of the researcher's position is key here, and I enacted the author's recommendation to use an informed colleague to check for possible subjectivity to help mitigate this. Subjectivity, however, is inevitable, and I have aimed throughout to be open and reflective in my acknowledgement of this.

Writing the analysis of the data did at times feel uncomfortable. I noticed this particularly when teachers commented on the impact of poor student behaviour or when students criticised teaching practices. I felt the importance of participant anonymity keenly during these moments and reminded myself of the importance of telling the participants' stories rather than writing the story I preferred to tell, in addition to my adherence to the BERA (2018) ethical guidelines. I was mindful that interviews are inherently interactional events, and talk is locally and collaboratively produced (Rapley, 2007). Therefore, in a sense, the interview is a joint accomplishment of the interviewer and respondent (Dingwall, 1997).

v) Issues surrounding dissemination of findings

I also have an ethical responsibility not to sanitise the results: BERA (2018) states that researchers must communicate the extent to which inferences drawn from findings are selective or distorted. This is partially to mitigate the cost of time spent undertaking research instead of on teaching and learning. Roberts and Allen (2015) assert that within the educational context, procedural ethics is of importance, and time spent by students, teachers, and researchers on research that does not result in the collection of data of sufficient quality, such as in terms of representation, may be better spent on educational experiences.

BERA (2018) maintains that participants are entitled to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity, although this is difficult to achieve in small-scale research, and particularly in the researcher's own setting, in the internet age. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) legislation ensures that citizens are entitled to know how and why their personal data is being stored, defining this as any information relating to an identifiable person. Personal information in the data was replaced with aliases that I had randomly generated online, and personal information was stored separately from the data. This is of particular concern when considering how widely the results may be disseminated and through which networks. Stutchbury and Fox (2015) suggest that there are ethical concerns surrounding the issue of making private experiences public, although this can be countered by the opportunity for teachers to reflect in detail on their learning. The consent forms therefore stated that there may be limits to confidentiality and anonymity.

Anonymised findings will be shared with any interested parties. In addition to this opportunity for teachers, sharing research findings is also of paramount importance to students as research participants. Failure to do so may create suspicion and discontent in students' attitude towards adult researchers (Alderson, 1995; Valentine, 1999) and jeopardise their possible participation in future research (Fisher, 2005).

Hard copies of data such as interview notes and audio recordings are kept securely locked away or password protected. Only I have access to the hard data. I am using the recommended university database for storing data: this will be within Amazon Web Services (AWS), within the Republic of Ireland. Hard copies of the data will be shredded or erased and online surveys will be permanently deleted, and the data will be kept for no longer than is necessary; the consent form states this is inclusive

of the potential for data to be quoted in research outputs should I choose to publish papers or present at conferences.

vi) Reflections

As I view validity as a positivist notion, I have instead aimed for authenticity throughout this research (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). I am not, however, claiming that there is one, correct, "objective" account of the phenomenon of teacher expectation, nor that I have a God's eye view (Putnam, 1990). There is no absolute truth, only descriptive accuracy (Maxwell, 1992). On reflection, I have aimed throughout this study to accurately reflect the self-reporting of the researched (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995).

One possible way to achieve greater authenticity may have been to ask participants to verify my accounts of focus groups and interviews. I had dismissed this option as I was concerned that my demands on the participants' time had already been significant, but I could nevertheless have offered this option to participants to verify my interpretative understanding of their words (Maxwell, 1992). The procedure of taking the raw data and interpretations back to the participants in the study would have ensured the lens of the researched remained focused on the participants (Cresswell and Miller, 2000) as participants' comments could have also been incorporated into my final narrative. I did however, ask an informed colleague to check for possible subjectivity. I am also mindful that there are many voices that remain unheard within this research, and these voices may differ from those of the research participants (Maxwell, 2017). In particular, it would have been beneficial students from a low socio-economic status to be represented in greater number throughout this study, and in addition for greater numbers of male students to have participated in the focus group stage of the research.

In the subsequent chapter, I will explain my choice to analyse the data using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2012), the process I undertook in order to complete the analysis, and present the analysis of the data collected.

Chapter 4: Thematic Analysis

In the previous chapter, I outlined the theoretical framework underpinning the methodological approach I have adopted for my research, discussed my ontological stance, and given an explanation of the research methodology employed in my research design. In this chapter, I will explain my decision to analyse the data using thematic analysis, explain the process I undertook to complete the analysis, and explore the key claims from the thematic analysis of the data.

The main research questions I considered are as follows:

1. What are teachers' and students' perceptions of teacher expectations in the workplace?
2. What strategies do teachers and students believe teachers use to create a culture of high expectations?
3. What are the perceived barriers to creating a culture of high expectations?

I had chosen to analyse the data using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2012). Although there is debate over whether thematic analysis is a method in its own right, the approach to thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) locates it in a qualitative paradigm, allowing a flexible approach to coding and theme development (Hayfield *et al*., 2017). Through this qualitative lens, the subjectivity of the researcher is integral to the analytical process. Themes are developed from coding following detailed engagement with the data, and rigour is achieved through a systematic and thorough approach, rather than seeing the data as containing a 'truth' waiting to be found (Hayfield *et al*., 2017). Although a strength of this approach is that it is flexible, it is not atheoretical, and treating it is such would limit its interpretative power (Braun and Clarke, 2012). Therefore, my own research paradigm will form my theoretical perspective as well as my position, in that my view is that reality is socially constructed. As thematic analysis can be used to analyse a range of data types, it is suitable for the case study approach in this study, which includes a range of methods of data collection.

Braun and Clarke (2019) view qualitative research as being about meaning and meaning-making, viewing these as context-bound, positioned and situated. The authors see qualitative data analysis as telling 'stories', interpretation and creating data. Therefore, my analysis is the product of data immersion, thoughtfulness and

reflection, and it is also a product of an active and generative process (Braun and Clarke, 2019).

Analysis of the data began at the start of the data collection process; both the semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted with the objectives of the research in mind. It could be argued that analysis is a lived aspect of the data as decisions about the direction of the unfolding nature of the conversations are made during the interview process (Gibson and Brown, 2009). Although this may suggest an inductive approach to the research, there are overall research questions that drive the project. Therefore, the context of the research is also deductive as I asked specific questions of the respondents (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As interviews and focus groups were conducted using active, empathetic listening (Brockbank and McGill, 2012), conversations vary in terms of focus as respondents may have appeared more engaged and were more voluble when answering specific questions.

This data collection process was also the initial phase of my familiarisation with the data. The second phase consisted of transcription. Although responses from focus groups and interviews were transcribed, transcription is a form of representation that involves making analytical judgements about what to represent and how to represent it (Gibson and Brown, 2009). A limitation in my choice to use orthographic transcription, recording *what* was said rather than *how* it was said means that the transcripts are less 'messy' in their written form. As a novice researcher, this decision was made as this meant that the transcripts were easier to read.

Additionally, the omission of some paralinguistic features means the transcripts maybe less nuanced than the conversations themselves. However, throughout the transcription process, I have aimed to be as thorough and consistent as possible through repeated revisiting of the data, whilst being aware that the transcripts are the product of an interaction between myself and the recordings, which are in turn the product of an interaction between myself and the participants. With the aim of producing a high quality of representation throughout the transcripts, I signalled what was said and who was speaking. Words and some non-semantic sounds, as well as slang terms, are included along with more significant paralinguistic features of the data, such as significant pauses and laughter. Punctuation has been included to aid readability, but with close reference to audio recordings to ensure meaning has not been altered. Speakers are identified by either a pseudonym (representative of gender and ethnicity) or by role (interviewer), and turns of talk are

presented on a new line to make the transcripts visually clear (Clarke and Braun, 2013). The close reading and interpretative skills necessary for the transcription process led to further familiarisation with the data.

At this stage, questionnaire responses and transcripts were coded using NVivo software. The software was helpful in ensuring that the entire data set was represented, whilst looking for repeated patterns of meaning (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Table 2: Coverage of data in relation to sources

Source	**Context**	**Number of codes**	**Number of references**
Abbie (teacher)	Teaches in attainment groupings	8	13
Amelia (teacher)	Teaches in attainment groupings and mixed attainment groupings	7	15
Caitlin, Hannah and Sophie (students)	Middle attaining students	10	16
Clarissa (teacher)	Teaches in attainment groupings	10	20
Daniella (teacher)	Teaches in attainment groupings	7	12
Georgia, Lauren and Maddie (students)	Higher attaining students	10	19
Hayley (teacher)	Teaches in attainment groupings	10	18
Joshua (teacher)	Teaches in attainment groupings	7	10
Lewis, Jordan and Sol (students)	Prior lower attaining students	9	14
Rosa (teacher)	Teaches in mixed attainment	10	18
Ruby, Leo and Darcy (students)	Middle attaining students	7	16

Teacher questionnaire	Teaches in both mixed attainment and attainment grouping	12	27
Student questionnaire	Higher, middle and previously lower attaining students	13	36

However, although this process was useful, it inevitably only tells a partial story. For example, detailed engagement with the data shows a source containing fewer codes and references may contain the potential for deep insights but only into fewer topics.

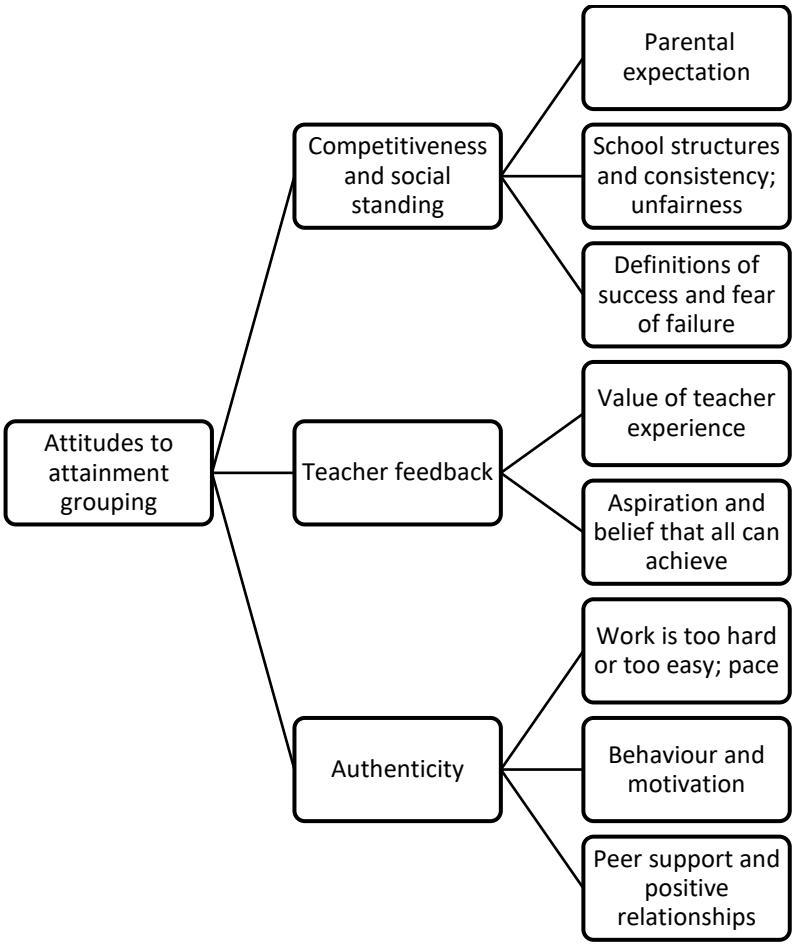

Figure 1: Initial organisation of codes

The initial codes are outlined in the diagram above; they aim to organise the data into meaningful groups and included contradictions and tensions in addition to

similarities in patterns found within the data. These were decided in terms of prevalence in terms of each item, and in terms of the data set. I began by ordering the data with a code entitled attitudes to attainment groupings, as comments related to attainment groupings were most frequent. Comments included both positive and negative feelings towards both setting and mixed attainment groupings. Research participants also referred frequently to competiveness and social standing, the role of teacher feedback and comments related to authenticity. For the final set of groupings (parental expectation; school structures, consistency and unfairness; value of teacher experience; aspiration and a belief that all can achieve highly; pitch and pace of schoolwork; behaviour and motivation and peer support and positive relationships), I aimed for flexibility: prevalence was not necessarily defined by quantifiable measures, but also by relevance to the research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Coding labels were intended to evoke was what analytically relevant, with the aim of beginning the analytical process and considering latent meanings. Although the data was approached with specific questions in mind, as the entire data set was coded, it was possible to identify additional patterns to those generated by my questions within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). These patterns included parental expectation, behaviour and motivation, competitiveness and authenticity. These patterns are of relevance to the research questions. As my analysis of the data is selective, answers to closed questions in the questionnaire were omitted as these were not relevant to the research question. These questions began the questionnaire and may have been helpful as ‘warm-up’ questions from the point of view of the participants.

Organising clusters of codes into themes was a lengthy and reflective process, consisting of iteratively moving between the data set, codes and potential themes. Throughout this process, shared patterns between the codes were explored, with the aim of capturing implicit meaning. With the aim of answering the research questions, I grouped the codes into themes exploring the perceptions of the practices of high expectation teachers, including separating the initial coding of teachers’ use of questioning into teachers’ use of questioning and the role of feedback. The next theme included perceived barriers to creating a culture of high expectation. As this theme was broader in terms of topic coverage, it was divided into sub-groups: barriers at the level of self, such as a fear of failure; at the level of home environment, such as parental expectation; and at the level of institution, such

as pace, challenge and class size. The theme of the impact of ability labelling as a perceived barrier to creating a culture of high expectation incorporated the codes of competition and social standing. This was closely connected to attitudes to attainment grouping, which I divided into sub-groups, exploring both attitudes to attainment grouping and the consequences of attainment grouping. Codes related to teaching strategies to remove barriers to attainment were combined as a further theme, including the belief that all students can achieve high educational attainment. The final theme was derived from coding related to relationships, authenticity and the value of being known. Visually mapping out the patterns helped to combine, separate and refine these themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The focus of the coding was developed from semantic coding and capturing explicit meaning into adding more latent orientation and capturing more implicit meaning (Hayfield *et al*., 2017). This process continued until the themes were at a fully realised stage, they had a pattern of shared, implicit meaning and were underpinned by the central concept of understanding the perception of teacher expectation in this workplace. The themes generated are distinctive but connected, and more complex themes contain sub-themes to improve the structure of the analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Aside from responses irrelevant to the research question, the themes exhaust the data, covering the majority of it (Howitt and Cramer, 2014). Data extracts are used both illustratively and analytically (Hayfield *et al*., 2017), and data collected from teachers and students is presented as part of the same theme to represent the school as one community, not as disparate teacher and student bodies.

As the research aims to explore teachers' and students' views of the beliefs and practices of high-expectation teachers, and to offer greater insight into teaching beliefs and strategies that are perceived as creating a culture of high expectation and, additionally, to explore the barriers to creating a culture of high expectation, data extracts are used both illustratively and analytically (Hayfield *et al*., 2017), and data collected from teachers and students is presented as part of the same theme to represent the school as one community, not as disparate teacher and student bodies.

4.1 Creating a culture of high expectation: teaching strategies and practices

My own research bases its case study questionnaire, interview and focus group questions on the beliefs and practices of high expectation teachers as defined by theoretical models (Rubie-Davies, 2015), and notions of teacher identity, with the aim of answering the research questions asked in the study. These are:

1. What are teachers' and students' perceptions of teacher expectations in the workplace?
2. What strategies do teachers and students believe teachers use to create a culture of high expectation?
3. What are the perceived barriers to creating a culture of high expectation?

Therefore, references to these teaching strategies and practices are now explored.

i) Questioning in the classroom

Several teachers refer to dialogic teaching, classroom conversation and questioning as important classroom tools for both furthering student confidence and understanding, as well as for building teacher-student relationships. One teacher participant, Joshua, uses questioning partially to build students' confidence in the belief they can attain good marks in his subject: "You perhaps get them to answer one or two questions that they will fly through, but you make them feel successful…it's the *perception* of how successful they are". Additionally, Joshua believes that in his subject area:

> Feedback to the teacher comes from asking lots of questions. Because concepts build on one another, it is important that teachers are constantly establishing if the foundations are there and testing understanding at each point along the way – this feedback to the teacher enables the teacher to know what needs re-explaining and what examples may benefit students (teacher interview, July 2018).

Other teachers also believe that feedback is bi-directional, helping the teacher know what to teach next in addition to supporting students' independence, as well as helping them know how to improve their work themselves.

> Interviewer: Do you find you use feedback to support them?
>
> Rosa: I think it would be encouragement – 'well done'. If it's glaringly obvious, or if it doesn't work…and also letting the kids know you're not the expert all the time. I've got a lovely group and I feel comfortable that I can experiment. I tell them I've got something new to try out and I want some feedback…then I'm asking them what they want to do next and I'm giving them a choice.

Rosa uses questioning to build confidence, but in that she encourages questioning from students:

> Some students ask lots of questions, and one student, she asked a question and said 'Oh, that's stupid', and I said 'No, that's a fantastic question – that shows me how much you understand', and you can see her growing! You say 'Fantastic!' and they say 'Am I, miss? Am I? And for her, the change has been brilliant (teacher interview, July 2018).

Clarissa similarly believes that encouraging of student questioning can be transformational and, in doing so, shows how she aims to value the voices of all learners in her classroom.

> No question's not important, everyone's entitled to ask, and even if it is a daft question if you like, you say 'oh that's interesting' and you turn it round the other way so that everyone's point of view is important, and they are confident enough to open up so you can understand why they don't understand, because that's half the battle (teacher interview, July 2018).

The roles of teacher and student are sometimes presented as interchangeable and fluid, as teachers show their own struggle with new knowledge with the aim of modelling the learning process and building self-confidence. Clarissa echoes Rosa's comment about the nature of expertise.

> Clarissa: No question is silly, saying 'I found that as well', or 'I found that quite challenging', so showing that you're not the expert all the time…I think that's key…a child who's worried is never going to learn. They bring too much baggage with them. And you've got to remember as well a child who comes in with that baggage on a day-to-day basis (teacher interview, July 2018).

One Year 9 student, Lauren, explains that teachers expect her to produce "meaningful answers to questions I have thought of myself" (student focus group, July 2018), but not all students feel that the questions teachers ask are for the purpose of helping them improve. Jordan perceives questioning more negatively: "My teacher always asks me the questions. I don't really like it because I feel like she's targeting me"; the verb "targeting" here implying that Jordan feels he is receiving unwarranted attention (student focus group, July 2018). I noticed that Jordan's non-verbal messages at this point reflected his emotions, as he crossed his arms defensively. I practised congruence here, and listened with empathy and without judgement (Brockbank and McGill, 2012).

In the research literature, Rubie-Davies (2007) defines teacher questioning as an aspect of teacher-student interaction and finds that teachers with high expectations ask more open questions, designed to enhance or extend thinking. When they ask closed questions, their students are also required to make inferences. Therefore, students' abilities to question, discuss and synthesise information are more frequently developed. When students answer a question correctly, teachers with high expectations question their students further so they think more deeply about their response and provide scaffolding to support answers where necessary (Rubie-Davies, 2007). This may also support students' metacognitive skills, in developing their awareness of and knowledge about their own thinking (Zimmerman, 2010).

Paramore (2017) finds that there is a dominance of teacher talk and closed questions in teaching, which provide only limited information for a teacher, and is in agreement with Rubie-Davies (2007) that, in comparison, open questions promote better classroom dialogue when appropriate (Tofade, Elsner and Haines, 2013). However, closed questions can be important to allow for greater accuracy of response, suggesting that different types of questions should be used in different classroom situations to maximise student learning (Tofade, Elsner and Haines, 2013).

Teachers here may also be seen as adopting approaches such as Alexander's (2017) dialogic teaching to extend student thinking through teacher questioning. Similar to the teachers in the sample, Chrisoph and Nystrand (2001) find that dialogic teaching flourishes when teachers' questions are embedded in a culture of taking students seriously and in classrooms characterised by mutual respect. In this learning environment, students are not only required to listen and answer but to take part in discussions about their own learning (Davies, Kiemer and Meissel, 2017).

ii) The role of feedback

In the data, the role of feedback is partially associated with goal-setting: teachers state that they use feedback to "identify specific areas or skills to improve, and a way forward"; to "point out areas of weakness and make it clear what is needed to improve the answer"; to "identify what they are already doing well which boosts their confidence and provides them with ideas of how to improve when they complete a similar piece of work"; to "help students to understand exactly what they need to do to improve"; to "pinpoint common errors or misconceptions and relay these back to students so they avoid these common mistakes in the future"; to "help them move on from their mistakes or misunderstandings, tailored to how they have performed"; to "help students identify what they are doing well already and where they need to focus their attention next"; to "gauge their starting point and any gaps in knowledge that need to be filled", and; to "deepen their understanding of their current position and give them guidance on next steps" (teacher questionnaire, June 2018). These comments suggest that feedback is given with the aim of improving students' learning, and redirecting students' actions to achieve a goal.

Feedback can also redirect the teacher's actions. Joshua explains how he uses assessments to gain information on and, then, clarify student misconceptions:

> If they do an assessment and half the class have got that question wrong, that's clearly your planning. You need to teach that concept again, possibly in a different way. I dunno, they're not a blank canvas when they come in, are they? If you look at an assessment sometimes, it might seem illogical to you but it's their best possible guess under the circumstances. They're trying to reconstruct

> something they've previously learnt perhaps…so it is useful sometimes to see exactly what they're getting wrong, then you can address that (teacher interview, July 2018).

Teachers frequently comment on the value and importance of verbal feedback in addition to written feedback. As Abbie states:

> Some students prefer a verbal conversation. Some need an extra pointer in their book because they're actually quite independent, but a couple of key things in their book can have a real impact on what they do. And I try and make sure ones I haven't seen one lesson, I see the next. So within I suppose a cycle of lessons across the fortnight I will have seen them all. And that's been really useful for them (teacher interview, July 2018).

Joshua comments on the way written marking, used formatively to inform instruction or to make modifications and adjustments during the lesson, has been used as an accountability tool. He explains his belief that verbal feedback can lead to a more meaningful dialogue between teacher and student:

> We've often sort of fetishized written feedback almost as proof of having done our jobs, but I think that verbal feedback is the most important thing, and literally at the time. I think a teacher's role, I mean, sometimes a teacher can be sat at the desk, fine, but I think generally they should be out and about, circling, looking at what's going on, talking to the kids. I think that's a great way of building relationships and a great way to see what they're doing at that moment. Students often need to be successful at something pretty soon, otherwise they're going to ingrain mistakes, so I think it's a big part of it, to anticipate and plan for those misconceptions (teacher interview, July 2018).

Amelia explains that she also finds verbal feedback to be a more helpful way of clarifying misconceptions:

> With the best will in the world, even if they have to respond to a written comment, they can do that without having any intention of doing their declarations. If you can speak to them as an individual, they can give you an answer that you can challenge on the spot. I

> find it much easier to do verbally – to have a conversation rather than put it on a piece of paper (teacher interview, July 2018).

Teachers also comment that "giving feedback while students are writing is particularly effective as they can correct any misunderstandings on the spot" (teacher questionnaire, June 2018), and Clarissa feels feedback is "vital: more often than not within my subject, this has to be orally or visually on a one-to-one basis" (teacher interview, July 2018). Hayley is in agreement that clarity is important in verbal feedback, "I always try to start with a positive so they know they've done something good. Even if it's verbal, they've got to understand where they're going, where they need to improve" (teacher interview, July 2018).

The reinforcement of positive teacher-student relationships as a consequence of feedback is evident in the responses from several teachers who comment that "students like feedback as it makes them feel valued. This, in turn, can boost confidence in their work"; "it's an opportunity to build relationships and encourage"; feedback can be used "to recognise effort" and so students "know what they have done correctly so that they can feel pleased but challenged" (teacher questionnaire, June 2018).

The significance of effort and the importance of clarity is acknowledged by students as well as teachers, as evident in Year 9 student Lauren's comment:

> I feel that the teachers in certain subjects strive further to help their students improve their work, maybe marking their books regularly or staying back at lunch to help them. Whereas others sometimes correct you on your answers but don't explain the reasoning behind this (student focus group, June 2018).

This is one example of when I had to be mindful of my own emotions; although I felt defensive at Lauren's criticism of my peers, instead of negating Lauren's experience, I allowed myself to experience the emotion and instead, restated Lauren's words to her with the aim of summarising how she felt. This step gave me time to remember the importance of listening attentively to research participants, and of respecting their views as individuals.

In the research literature, the role of feedback as a practice of high-expectation teachers is an instructional practice closely linked with goal setting. Rubie-Davies *et al.*, (2015) find that high-expectation teachers provide their students with clear

feedback about progress towards their goals, designed to reinforce their learning and to provide direction for it. Consequently, students understand their next steps but with a focus on mastery rather than performance goals (Rubie-Davies, 2015). Similarly, in addition to the importance of questioning, dialogic teaching and classroom conversation, teachers in this workplace value the role of feedback with the aim of creating a culture of high expectation. In fields outside teacher expectancy research, feedback has also been suggested as an important instructional practice for improving student learning. Hattie (2012) reminds us that the purpose of feedback is to reduce the gap between current attainment and the success criteria. Feedback can be provided in many ways, and it typically comes after instruction. According to Hattie, (2012), goals relate to feedback in three ways: goals inform students about the level of performance desired; feedback establishes conditions for ongoing learning, and goals need to be challenging or feedback will have little effect. Hattie and Timperley (2007) suggest a model of feedback to enhance learning, commenting that effective feedback questions work at four levels: task, process, self-regulation and self.

However, an unforeseen consequence of implementing Hattie's findings in schools has been its impact on teacher workload: the "fetishization" of written feedback that Joshua references. The DfE (2016c) reports that feedback can take the form of spoken or written marking, peer-assessment and self-assessment. Furthermore, not all forms of feedback appear to be effective in improving learning. These include praise and reward (Shank, 2017), comparison to others and threats or discouragement (Shute, 2008). Butler *et al.*, (2014) suggest that making feedback an explicit part of the learning process leads to a significant improvement in learning, although this can be dependent on whether the learner is a novice or more advanced, and novice learners will benefit more from task-specific, directive feedback. Therefore, the complexity inherent in giving effective feedback warrants further exploration.

High-expectation teachers provide their students with more feedback designed to reinforce their learning and provide direction. These students are regularly given information about what they have already achieved, and what they need to do to improve. Students are, therefore, able to set task mastery goals rather than performance goals, so the focus is on their own learning (Rubie-Davies, 2015). However, although the literature on goal theory is incredibly valuable, it tends to focus on the microcosm of the classroom, whilst ignoring broader social contexts

(Jackson, 2006), and as a consequence, these will be addressed throughout the thematic analysis.

Furthermore, defining 'mastery' is problematic. Using Rubie-Davies's (2015) definition, mastery goals provide direction for student learning. Rubie-Davies (2015) refers to goal setting theory as developed by Locke and Latham (1990), who propose that there are three conditions that need to be in place before a goal is met. Individuals need to have capacity to meet the goal; they need to be committed to the goal, and the goal must be specific and clear. When an individual believes they can achieve the goal, and they want to achieve it, this is likely to lead to enhanced performance and learning (Locke and Latham, 1990).

Goal theory assumes that students' motivation is influenced not only by their individual personal dispositions and beliefs but also by the environment (Maehr, 1984; Nicholls, 1989; Ames, 1992). Teachers' practices and classroom routines may, therefore, contribute to students' perception of goal structures. Goal structures may emphasize mastery goals, or the development of competence, and performance goals, or the demonstration of competence. Students may perceive an emphasis on both, to varying degrees, in the same classroom (Patrick, Kaplan and Ryan, 2011). A mastery goal structure involves a perception that students' real learning and understanding, rather than just memorization, are valued and that success is accompanied by effort and indicated by personal improvement or by achieving absolute standards (Patrick, Kaplan and Ryan, 2011).

A further definition of mastery learning refers to the form of instructional practice pioneered by Bloom (1968). This is based on the belief that individual differences exist in learning needs and styles. Students' predisposition to learn is also perceived to be malleable, and it is believed that all students can learn well and attain task mastery under favourable instructional conditions. Teachers accommodate their instructional practices and adopt diverse methods to give students as much time as they need to fully comprehend the classroom material (Tan and Liem, 2018).

A final interpretation of mastery can be seen in educational policy as schools are encouraged to adopt the 'mastery' approach of the Far East, possibly as Shanghai has been lauded as an educational success story following the findings of the OECD's 2012 PISA report. This approach may be misinterpreted by politicians as a need to place greater emphasis on memorisation and rote learning (DfE, 2016). The

importance of context may be underestimated by politicians here; Ball (1997) warns us that the "flow and influence of policies between nations needs to be addressed with care" (Ball, 1997, p.267). The OECD Education Policy Outlook report (2015) warns policymakers to keep the context of education systems in mind in order to implement policy effectively, although Ball (1997) refers to the think-tank OECD as "crude and lumbering…bulldozing over human dignity without pause for thought" (Ball, 1997, p.33). The increasingly complex and significant global influences evident here are embedded in national systems of educational policymaking. Policies are formed and developed in relation to international competition, which then changes the meaning of education and what it means to be educated.

4.2 Perceived barriers to creating a culture of high expectation for all at the level of self, others and the institution

In terms of the research questions, in addition to exploring strategies teachers and students believe teachers use to create a culture of high expectation, my research aims to problematise the literature, by exploring the perceived barriers to creating a culture of high expectation. Despite the use of a range of teaching strategies and practices with the aim of creating a culture of high expectation, teachers and students in the study believe that there are barriers to achieving this culture for some students in this context.

i) At the level of self: home environment

Teachers feel that some students are hindered in their progress at school as their parents and carers are coping with other burdens. As Hayley considers:

> Is that to do with home environment? Is it easier for kids whose parents are supportive and say 'Go and sit on the laptop for two hours and research', whereas there might be some kids who have to fight for the laptop because they've got five siblings, or there's no laptop or nobody's bothered about homework. I mean, they might have the ability but, I don't know, it's almost a cultural thing (teacher interview, July 2018).

Some teachers acknowledge barriers to learning and employ specific strategies in their attempts to counteract them, although they admit this is often difficult. Abbie comments "if they haven't got that support at home to raise their aspirations,

sometimes it can take a while, even up to a term, for them to start to believe that they can achieve" (teacher interview, July 2018).

Daniella believes that setting clear boundaries and making expectations explicit exemplifies a culture of high expectation. She feels these are of paramount importance to overcoming these types of barriers to learning:

> If you start with that firm structure, then you can be warm and friendly because the students know where they are in terms of behaviour expectations. And they know how far…they're kind of more rooted. And I think that's particularly important for students that don't necessarily have that at home. I think if you've got…lots of students who have that at home, then I think that it's implicit. I think that's something we miss as teachers, the importance of that structure and students knowing where they are, and I think that's school-wide as well as in your own classroom and what have you…and then I think it almost sets some children up to fail.

She views the setting of clear boundaries and expectations as a form of meritocracy:

> And I wonder if it almost has an impact on the more disadvantaged students and the boys more than girls. And I know I'm absolutely generalising here, forgive me for a minute. But I think those who can read body language and get a sense of the situation without being told are going to benefit, because they understand those social rules. And benefit those who have that structure at home, whether you can link that with disadvantage or not. They're not going to know. And just being really explicit, and then you can rein back from that (teacher interview, July 2018).

Joshua agrees that disadvantage can be a barrier, but believes that this is more impactful on academic, rather than social, knowledge:

> Some students have to rely on knowledge and skills developed only in school. Because learning new information depends on the level of prior background knowledge, it must follow that some students find it easier to succeed academically than others (teacher interview, July 2018).

Other teachers maintain that equity in our treatment of students is inherently problematic due to factors outside of school. As Rosa explains:

> What's shouting at them going to do? And when you talk to them, they have got such problems. (teacher interview, July 2018).

Further examples of barriers to creating a culture of high expectations given by teachers in the study sample are: "home situation and expectations, and access to reading materials"; "some students have more support at home; in my subject, those who read more widely and have a varied vocabulary succeed"; "parental support can influence academic success"; "those with parental support make significant progress compared to some students who did not consider this a method of success" and that "family background, their health and mental well-being, social class, previous educational experiences all impact on students' ability to succeed academically" (teacher questionnaire, June 2018).

Conversely, Year 9 student Maddie is aware of the impact of middle-class parental expectation:

> Obviously, the teachers have expectations and the students have expectations, and you've also got their parents. Parents sort of use it as a leeway. So, if you want to do something or go somewhere this weekend it's 'you need to get this in Science this week'. But your parents may not know what's going on in school. Because not all teenagers like to share what they do in their lessons with their parents (student focus group, June 2018).

Maddie's comment illustrates the complexities of conducting research with young adult participants: she is independent enough from her family to want to keep some experiences private, but relies on her family to give her permission on how to spend her leisure time. I am aware, however, that Maddie's family context, and their interest in her studies, is not representative of all participants in the case study, or moreover of those in the workplace as a whole.

To be explored further in the subsequent discussion chapter, and with the aim of informing policy discourses and tackling social inequity, the political context that frames this theme is significant. Blandford (2018) asserts that despite investment and targeted government interventions, disadvantaged students are, on average, two years of learning behind non-disadvantaged students by the end of secondary

school. This government emphasis, and subsequent efforts to close the 'attainment gap', has focussed the attention of teachers on the attainment of the most disadvantaged students.

However, the discourse of social mobility and democracy is not exclusive to the present Conservative government. Characterised by a belief in the power of markets, neoliberalism displaced the Keynesian consensus which existed in parts of the West following the end of the Second World War, until it began to be replaced towards the end of the 1970s. Neoliberal influences have since been evident throughout contemporary British politics, including state education in England: the ongoing marketisation of state education in England represents one facet of Thatcher's neoliberal legacy. Wright (2012) suggests that New Labour sought out ways of rearticulating social democracy (the 'third way') so that they were compatible with a market society, believing that the government could intervene and build on the neoliberal market society, but with strong communitarian values.

This centralised stance led to a stipulation of a one-dimensional model of educational success, and to the seemingly incompatible goals of social justice and fairness being subsumed by market logics (Wright, 2012). Goldthorpe (2013) similarly suggests that a focus on social mobility had attractions for New Labour as a means of appealing to aspirational families, while appropriating a Conservative emphasis on claims of a meritocracy within a competitive system. However, for any government, attempts at increasing equality of opportunity are unlikely to be effective unless the class-linked inequalities of condition are themselves significantly reduced.

Similarly to Year 9 student Maddie's comments, Crozier *et al.*, (2011) point to the proactive, interventionist behaviours that middle-class parents have adopted in relation to their children's education, such as being seemingly more visible, attending parents' evenings or intervening on behalf of their child. Middle-class parents are also more likely to be members of the governing body or the Parent Teachers' Association. In addition, middle-class parents prepare their children for school through their family practices, material provision, customs and ethos, ensuring consonance between home, the child and school. These 'hidden' relationships (Bernstein, 1973) can provide a relatively smooth passage through school and an academically successful outcome.

'The New Statesman' (2015) reports that by 2020, child poverty in the UK will have increased by one-third to one in four children. Barnard *et al.*, (2018) report that 4.1 million children are living in poverty. Despite this, Wright (2012) finds that policy entails a shift in responsibility for social problems from the state to individuals. Goldthorpe (2013) compares the political accomplishment of increased social fluidity in Scandinavian societies and suggests that the political emphasis here has been less on educational policy and more on the reduction of class differences in incomes and levels of living through redistributive fiscal and welfare policies, strong trade unionism and employment protection to maintain the security and stability of incomes, as well as prioritising full employment.

Furthermore, the discourse of social democracy can be seen as defunct in a competitive market environment. In a market-driven school-led system, the privileged will be protected, reproducing rather than challenging existing inequalities (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Goldthorpe, 2013). Hence, these contextual factors present challenges to creating a culture of high expectation, particularly for less advantaged students. In terms of the research aims, applying the teaching beliefs and strategies that are perceived as creating a culture of high expectation is unlikely to address the depth of this inequity.

ii) At the level of self and others: behaviour, motivation, resilience and self-regulation

In addition to barriers created by factors influencing students' home environment, both students and teachers believe that students' behaviour and levels of motivation, resilience and self-regulation can become barriers to their learning. Teacher Amelia describes the low-level disruption to learning in her classroom.

> I think a massive problem is low-level disruption. I think that's really the key to us moving forward. A lot of our pupils don't do anything terrible, but they think it's okay to talk, to be distracting just ever so slightly. Little, careless, not quite with us. I deal with day after day of pupils thinking they don't have to listen, just good manners it comes down to, really (teacher interview, July 2018).

Students also perceive low-level disruptions to be a barrier to their learning, defining this as "disruption in class and chatting to other people across the room really

loudly" and "people who don't care what they get in school, so they just talk and try to distract others" (student questionnaire, June 2018). This lack of motivation is given as the most common cause of off-task behaviour. As teacher Daniella says:

> I would say some students don't get the fact they need to be working harder rather than it's about their ability. And I'm not sure some students actually make the link between working hard and actually getting better. They're just here for the ride. But then at the same time, you hear all the stuff about mental health and how anxious some students actually are (teacher interview, July 2018).

Teacher Joshua agrees that some students appear complacent:

> A lot of students have lower expectations of themselves than I have of them. I think they definitely tend to…I think a lot of students like to just get by, I think, sometimes. I met with a parent just last night and the student is just going through the motions, relying on their natural aptitude but not really pushing themselves, not using the extension materials, not really trying to excel in that respect (teacher interview, July 2018).

Teachers respond to this perceived lack of motivation in different ways. Clarissa relies on a positive relationship with her students and humour to demand high expectations of the standard of work they hand in:

> I don't mind if it's wrong as long as then I can unpick where you've gone wrong. But don't hand me in nothing. Because then, I get very cross because you couldn't be bothered because you were watching EastEnders I always tease them. It's like, how do I know what you can't do if you don't show me what you can do? So high expectations I think are key. It's high expectations, classroom climate and the belief they can achieve (teacher interview, July 2018).

Some teachers and students show compassion about the demands placed on each other. Year 9 student Caitlin understands that teaching can be challenging: "sometimes teachers get tired or frustrated. If kids are messing around, they might deal with it properly or just shout at them" (student focus group, July 2018). Equally, teacher Rosa empathises with her students, and considers their experience from their point of view: "I try and put myself in their situation. If they misbehave, I'm

really disappointed in them. And the good kids, they're just sitting there thinking…and it's like they know, and they can feel your angst at other kids" (teacher interview, July 2018).

Due to an additional learning need, Year 9 student Leo finds a noisy classroom particularly difficult, "if the classroom is extremely noisy, it can still be really disfocussing [*sic*] because I can hear people in the background" (student focus group, July 2018). Another Year 9 student expresses her frustration at others in her comment: "I'm not the person being loud and annoying; if they were talking, I would tell them to shut up!" (student questionnaire, June 2018).

A further barrier to learning that teachers describe is a lack of resilience and self-regulation in their students. Amelia explains her concern that students are allowed to become overly reliant in the school context: "they're just very needy. We have to respond to that, but we don't need to feed it. And what happens the day they leave if they don't build up any resilience? Do we just say bye? We've let them become reliant, but what do they do next?" (teacher interview, July 2018).

Mazenod *et al.*, (2018) also comment on the dependency culture that exists in schools, drawing on debates emanating from social policy and politics. The authors argue that the adoption of specific pedagogical practices with the aim of nurturing previously lower-attaining students may foster dependency on teachers and cap opportunities for independent learning. Evidently, the balance between support and dependency is difficult to achieve.

There are further possible reasons for students' struggles in their learning. As one teacher describes, "some students are more motivated, some have a higher degree of self-efficacy and believe that their effort will pay off, others have lower self-esteem and self-belief which I think impacts on their focus and independent work." Other teachers comment that some students simply find it more difficult to learn than others: "I think there is an innate ability with some students"; "it's just beyond them" and "some struggle due to gaps in prior knowledge and retention skills" (teacher questionnaire, June 2018).

As recorded in my research diary, I found this theme the most challenging to write about, but I needed to ensure my ethical integrity by operating reflexively, remembering my responsibility to tell the stories of research participants as authentically as possible. Reflexivity has the potential to reduce the power relations

between the researcher and the researched, especially concerning the production of knowledge (Cocks, 2006). I therefore needed to recognise my own vulnerability here, and accept my feelings of unease when analysing research participants' comments, acknowledging that although I found admitting it difficult, participants felt that low-level disruption is a barrier to creating a culture of high expectation.

In the research literature (Rubie-Davies, 2015), high-expectation teachers promote student motivation by making them feel supported and valued by teachers, as well as by their effort in academic tasks and behaviour in addition to achievement: references to relationships in the data will be explored in further detail later in this chapter. The motivational processes underlying pupils' learning behaviour can be a determiner of their achievement (Dweck, 1986; Hruska, 2011). Moreover, the virtues of learning for its own sake leads to better, more efficient learning, in addition to the benefits of personal growth and enhanced well-being (Covington, 2000).

The research literature also explores systems of rewards and sanction, with the aim of fostering student motivation. These are often based on behaviourist principles for changing patterns of behaviour (Brophy, 1981). Payne (2015) proposes that a behaviourist approach can be appealing for educators as it suggests that by rewarding desirable patterns of behaviour, undesirable ones will be eradicated, as according to the behaviourist theory of operant conditioning, rewards and punishments shape future behaviour (Brophy, 1981). In this way, education systems make assumptions about human nature and how it develops, presupposing how it can be changed. Specifically, behaviourism sees human beings as fundamentally passive and determined by the laws of stimulus and response (Daniels, Lauder and Porter, 2007). In the work of the behaviourist Skinner (1953) for example, human beings are assumed to have no free will. The value implication here is that students should be treated in a paternalistic way, in which their environment for learning is highly structured. However, from this perspective, the concept of passivity of the student is central. Furthermore, it fails to explore further motivators.

Motivation theory has been examined extensively through lenses other than the behaviourist perspective, one of the most extensively cited and most acknowledged being self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985). This theory acknowledges the controlling nature of institutionalised schooling and, simultaneously, proposes to use strategies to promote intrinsic motivation through the satisfaction of human

needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness, referring to the experience of behaviour as volitional and reflectively self-endorsed.

Motivation can be thought of as a continuum, ranging from "amotivation or unwillingness, to passive compliance, to active personal commitment" (Deci and Ryan, 1985, p.60). It is possible to move along the continuum; exposure to an activity through an external regulation might result in an orientation shift or value in an activity might be lost (Ryan and Deci, 2000). According to Bear (2013), researchers with a social constructivist orientation argue that tangible rewards may be detrimental to intrinsic motivation. However, researchers with an operant behavioural orientation disagree that tangible rewards are likely to harm intrinsic motivation. Akin-Little and Little (2009), for example, refer to Cameron's (2001) meta-analysis, which finds that rewards do not decrease intrinsic motivation. They assert that this finding has important implications for schools as many students do not find academic tasks initially appealing. To counter any detrimental effects of the use of extrinsic reinforcement, the authors recommend that rewards should not be given for a task "without regard for completion or quality" (Akin-Little and Little, 2009, p.86). Similarly, Hattie and Timperley (2007) find that effective teachers use rewards strategically in ways that help create a positive classroom climate.

iii) At the level of institution: pace, challenge and class size

Lack of motivation also seems to be connected to the level of pace and challenge in the classroom. Year 9 student Sophie feels that "there's a lot of people in my class that, if they're sat down and if the work *seems* hard then they'll sit there and they'll do it, but if the work seems too easy for them, they'll sit there and mess around" (student focus group, July 2018). Similarly, Jordan comments "I find it hard to be sensible in maths because there's no point trying in it because it's too easy. The teacher will give us homework that's, like, two-minute homework" (student focus group, July 2018). Other students make statements such as "I think the work is too easy" and "some of the work is too easy", but some students phrase this in terms of not being known and understood as learners: "I can do more than my teachers think I can"; "I expect to achieve more that my teachers expect me too"; "they underestimate me" and "I know that I am more capable than they think" (student questionnaire, June 2018). Year 9 student Ruby reflects on her own learning:

> What I think is, I've finished the work and I want more of it, but I want it to get harder. I want it on that part but I want it to get harder for me. Because if it's a question or a piece of writing that we have to do, I feel like if it got harder, I could do it to a better standard (student focus group, June 2018).

Ruby feels that, for her, learning could be more complex: "They start with the basics, from like primary school things, and we remember it, and then if we go on to harder stuff it would be better to build our learning" (student focus group, June 2018).

Mazenod *et al.*, (2018) find that teachers typically do not expect students in lower-attaining sets to be able to follow a similar pace as the students in higher-attaining groups, and that teachers adopt different pedagogical practices when teaching groups of differing prior attainment. This may restrict students' learning experiences. The voices of the students above, however, are taken from a range of attainment groupings, therefore the causes of insufficient challenge and a slower teaching pace than necessary may be multi-faceted.

Embracing the contradictions inherent in this study, this, however, is far from the case for all students. Other students comment that work is "always quite challenging"; "it's really hard" and "it has to be easier for me". The pace of the lessons is a further barrier to learning for some students, who make comments such as "it's hard with the amount of work and the speed the teachers do it. They'll give us work and expect it to be done in five minutes" (student questionnaire, June 2018). Year 9 student Caitlin explains: "The teacher says all these words and things and then says, 'Right, what is this?' and it's too fast, it's too much. They need to be slower" (student focus group, July 2018).

Some students feel that a slower pace in lessons could allow them to explore learning material in greater depth: "if we got more time, we could go into more detail". Year 9 student Maddie comments:

> In some subjects, my teachers take time and find new ways to explain and visualise the matter we are learning about, but others just seem to be written on the board, copied into our books and completed. Not allowing us to have a full connection with the learning as we are stuck in a cycle of the same exact thing (student focus group, July 2018).

Year 9 student Georgia feels similarly about her learning experience:

> My previous school focussed more on breadth rather than depth of learning, so I knew most of the topics we've done this year, but not in the same depth. I knew what we were doing, and the teacher recognised that, and he put up extension questions and things, but at the same time he'd say 'Oh, we're starting a new topic', and I'd think, 'Oh, I hope it's one I don't know', and then it would be, and I'd think 'Oh, ok' (student focus group, July 2018).

Georgia's disappointment here was reflected in her body language as she shrugged her shoulders, as if defeated by the disappointment of the lack of challenge given to her in both schools she has attended. Teachers in the sample however suggest possible reasons why they feel they need to prioritise pace over breadth in the curriculum. Amelia describes the pressures that she feels, related to teaching according to reformed GCSE exam specifications:

> It's pretty much impossible. There's whole chunks at higher tier that don't exist at foundation. I mean weeks' worth of teaching. The time scale doesn't fit. I have to teach at completely different rates to get work done, going like the clappers to get through the course. So it's time pressure. Everything is doable if you have loads of time (teacher interview, July 2018).

This is problematic however, when working in the current political context of constant change in terms of exam specifications, and when the political interpretation of high standards is presented differently by politicians than by Rubie-Davies *et al.*, (2015). For example, the desire for a more traditional curriculum (DfE, 2016) can be seen as ideological dominance as politicians manipulate education systems to pursue political goals or ideals (Kelly, 1999). Conservative politicians may be seeking a curriculum that is perceived to be traditional, claiming this helps in driving up moral and educational standards. Cannadine, Keating and Sheldon (2011) refer to the influence of neoconservative policies espoused by Thatcher. It was deemed necessary to outline what schools should teach, and ensure they did so to a testable, comparable standard. Apple (2004) posits that cultural capital in schools is an effective filtering device in the reproduction of a hierarchical society, and that any society which increases the gap between the rich and the poor in the control of and access to cultural capital should be questioned in terms of the

legitimacy of this inequality. This happens because the cultural capital of the middle class is taken as natural and employed as if all children have equal access to it, hence the struggle that is described by the respondents in this sample.

A further barrier perceived at the level of institution is that of class size. Teachers comment that when classes that are too large, they struggle to teach as effectively and are inhibited in the classroom strategies that they would prefer to use. Examples of these statements are: “it’s not the ability, it’s the class size”; “I’ve just had a class of 36 and they get very little verbal feedback”, and “when they need more support, it’s so much easier to do that in a smaller group” (teacher questionnaire, June 2018). As Hayley explains:

> Say in my Year 8 group, they’re not top, it’s set two slash three, because I’ve got a bouncy group, a massive group who need to focus, I think I can be honest, I feel like my expectations have had to lower because of some of the behaviour. They’re not going to be able to achieve as much. I’m sure if that was a much smaller class, like half the size, we could be flying (student focus group, July 2018).

One Year 9 student sees this from a student’s point of view, commenting on “disruption in class where teachers don't pay enough attention to individuals who need help” as a barrier to learning. Other students reflect on their own behaviour, stating that they know they “talk too much” (student questionnaire, June 2018). Some teachers use specific strategies to overcome these obstacles. Teacher Abbie uses the strategy of giving herself more time to provide valuable feedback:

> So, I’m thinking about my Year 9 group in particular. So, this is a big class, they’re very mixed ability, but rather than do whole-class feedback, live marking with them is much more powerful... some prefer a verbal conversation. Some need an extra pointer in their book because they’re actually quite independent, but a couple of key things in their book can have a real impact on what they do. And I try and make sure ones I haven’t seen one lesson, I see the next. So within, I suppose, a cycle of lessons across the fortnight, I will have seen them all. And that’s been really useful for them (teacher interview, July 2018).

According to the Education Endowment Foundation (2018), reducing class size will improve the quality of teaching and learning, in addition to improvements in student

behaviour and attitudes. However, this is only when the reduction in numbers is large enough to enable teachers to change their teaching approach. These gains are most likely to come from flexibility in terms of organising groups, and in the quality and quantity of feedback the students receive. As reducing class sizes to a level at which students benefit is likely to be prohibitively expensive, it may be beneficial for teachers to employ strategies such as Abbie's in which she provides high-quality and impactful feedback to larger classes verbally, without impacting on her own workload.

4.3 The impact of ability labelling on student self-perception and behaviours

In terms of the research questions, the perceived barriers to creating a culture of high expectation can also be explored in terms of the impact of ability labelling on student self-perception and behaviours. When learning is dominated by judgements of ability, students' sense of identity may be affected (Hart *et al*., 2004). Teachers and students are aware of the impact of ability labelling on student self-perception, and how this affects their behaviour as a particularly powerful barrier to creating a culture of high expectations. This includes labels that students give to themselves, as well as labels given to them.

In this workplace, students are taught in a combination of attainment grouping and mixed attainment grouping, dependent on the subject taught and on the age of the student. To define this type of grouping more precisely, this workplace groups students into sets. 'Setting' is a form of attainment grouping which involves pupils being allocated to classes on the basis of similar attainment levels for a particular curriculum area. This form of organisation allows pupils to be in different ability groups for different subject domains, while remaining in mixed ability classes in other parts of the curriculum. In some classrooms, teachers organise their classes by attainment grouping, i.e. pupils are given instructions and learning tasks that are appropriate for their level of perceived ability. These forms of grouping are sometimes combined.

The theme of the impact of labelling on student self-perception and behaviours is closely related to attainment grouping and its consequences: due to the frequency of references to attainment grouping and its consequences in the dataset, I have chosen to present the analysis of this data as a separate theme.

i) Student self-confidence

Teachers comment on students' lack of confidence and self-belief and suggest a variety of reasons for the same. One possible reason given is students' levels of academic self-concept; their beliefs about their academic abilities, which is sometimes related to the attainment groups they have been placed in. Teachers state that students' expectations of themselves can be lowered if "they're all lower-attaining students, they put that label on themselves"; "there are certainly students who think they're terrible, and there's a real self-esteem issue"; "some clearly feel inhibited and have low expectations"; "self-confidence in subjects can influence academic success" and "some students have lower self-esteem and self-belief which impacts on their focus" (teacher questionnaire, June 2018). As teacher Clarissa says:

> Those who are in the middle or weaker, they come with a lot of baggage, like 'I know I can never be good enough'. And it's the mindset thing. They put the concrete blocks on and they're never going to be able to do it, because they are actually shutting their brain down (teacher interview, July 2018).

A consequence of low academic self-concept seems to be that students are reluctant to try to achieve academic success for fear of failure. The fear of failure is evident in several students' responses. As one Year 9 student states:

> It's the stress and anxiety of wondering whether my work is actually good enough and of high standard, and wondering whether I will get the grades I want or fail miserably (student questionnaire, June 2018).

These concerns are similar to the response:

> I find preparation for exams extremely stressful to the point that I just turn up on the day with maybe a general idea of what it is about because I can't bare [*sic*] to even think about revision for a subject that I don't really understand anyway (student questionnaire, June 2018)

and Jordan's comment:

> sometimes teachers might set something a bit too high. I will try in many lessons, and when I do try they think 'oh, I can just set him higher work now' and I'll just come crashing down back to the same level I was before (student focus group, July 2018).

My research diary reveals my discomfort at Jordan's comment. I ensured my response at the time was empathic rather than emotional, and expressed at a level no deeper than Jordan's expressed feeling (Brockbank and McGill, 2012). I remained open and vigilant, in case Jordan needed to be reminded of his access to in-school support services if he became distressed. Additionally, this is an example of a time I found it helpful to ask an informed colleague to check I was being as transparent as possible in terms of my subjectivity.

Teachers also comment on students' fear of failure. Abbie addresses her students' use of negative language in relation to their academic self-concept and challenges it:

> They often start a discussion with me with 'I think I've got this wrong, but can you check it?' or 'I don't know if I've got it right', it's always quite negative and so I verbally get them to rephrase. And I'll say, 'No. Instead, I want you to say to me – I've done the best I can, what can I do next?' and that's such a small thing, but it's really powerful (teacher interview, July 2018).

Teachers also find that: "many students are under-ambitious regarding what they feel they are able to achieve. They often make statements which makes it sound like they are willing to settle. Almost too scared of not achieving to actually try" and "often lower-attaining students have very little belief in their ability…at this stage we can see students giving up". Some teachers believe students' fear of failure has been exacerbated by the demands of the new GCSE curriculum:

> some students have low self-esteem and seem convinced they are going to fail. The new GCSEs have also caused some students to think they will not cope (teacher questionnaire, June 2018).

Hattie (2009) comments on the importance of allowing students to make mistakes, as these should be seen as opportunities to learn. However, for this to happen, there needs to be a classroom climate in which there is low personal risk to responding publicly and failing (Nuthall and Alton-Lee, 1990). This relates to the following theme, the role of competition in the classroom.

ii) Competition

In connection with students' fear of failure, teachers and students comment on the competitive nature of education, and the impact this can have on students' self-belief and confidence. In higher sets, competition is discussed using more positive language, and as a motivating factor to drive students' academic achievement. Teacher Hayley finds:

> I've seen now, that top set Year 9, the advantage of having those really, really clever children together…I just reckon they kind of feed off each other, and they do make it slightly competitive even if they're not conscious of that competitiveness. But there's, it's like, they need to keep up, and not lose face in front of these very clever people (teacher interview, July 2018).

When it does happen though, this "loss of face" can feel uncomfortable from the student's point of view. Year 9 student Georgia remembers:

> Georgia: Earlier I was put in the wrong set, and I really didn't like that at all, because I felt that people were looking at me thinking 'Ooh, Georgia, why's she been put in Set 4?'
>
> Interviewer: When you said you were put in the wrong set, and people were thinking 'what's she doing here?', do you think people judge based on the sets that you're in?
>
> Georgia: Yeah. And because of, the kind of reputation you build up from always, you know, being in top sets, if you aren't then people are going to look and ask why (student focus group, July 2018)..

Clarissa feels that the labelling of students is not a consequence of attainment grouping but a consequence of students' ability to rank and compare themselves with each other:

> I think it's perceptions from the kids. You can call them yellow spots or squares but the kids know who the clever kids are. So I think that's the only negative, it's the label. It's not the actual work going on in the classroom, it's the label. And parental preconception that can enforce that (teacher interview, July 2018).

Teachers also comment that students "are often very perceptive at ranking themselves in comparison to their peers"; "students are acutely aware of their rank" and "they don't have confidence to speak in front of people they perceive to be better than them" (teacher questionnaire, June 2018). Students in higher sets are also aware of the demands such ranking places on them. As Year 9 student Maddie observes:

> Everybody will try and work with people in the top sets when we have group tasks because then we can do the work. They have that kind of expectation we will be happy to do the work for them. Especially in a subject you're not strong in, they assume you'll know everything about it, even if you don't know the answer (student focus group, July 2018).

Covington (1998) suggests that the use of competition can be problematic and a dubious way of supporting children to learn, as it encourages a world view that sets person against person and discourages co-operation. Furthermore, this emphasis on competitive individualism in schools can create a climate in which defensive behaviours are fostered by students who fear academic failure (Jackson, 2002). Archer *et al.*, (2018) suggest that specifically, setting in schools is a means of reflecting and reproducing the interest of dominant social groups, ensuring that students 'know their place', playing a role in reproducing social hierarchies.

4.4 Teacher and student attitudes towards attainment grouping: rationale, consequences and impact

As the research aims to explore teachers and students' views of the beliefs and practices of high-expectation teachers, and to offer greater insight into teaching beliefs and strategies that are perceived as creating a culture of high expectation, teachers and students were asked about their attitudes to attainment grouping, and

their perceptions of the quality of students' work in relation to others. High expectation teachers prefer to differentiate by choice and outcome, rather than by attainment grouping (Rubie-Davies, 2015).

As the context of Rubie-Davies' (Rubie-Davies *et al.*, 2010; Rubie-Davies, 2015) research is in New Zealand, my questions were also based on the work of Francis *et al*., (2017), as their research on grouping in English secondary schools is the most current in the field. References to attainment grouping in the data are now explored.

i) Attitudes towards attainment grouping

Teachers comment that for them, one factor in their positive attitude to attainment grouping is the perceived impact on workload that mixed attainment grouping could create. As Amelia states:

> Certainly, it makes life easier – if you're differentiating across a massive range of abilities, it's just that bit harder and conceptually, they're at very different stages. If it's just factual stuff it's not so important, but if it's concepts, having grouping is much more important (teacher interview, July 2018).

Daniella agrees that teaching across the attainment range is problematic from a teaching point of view:

> If you're talking about the truest range of ability in this comprehensive school, I personally from a professional development point of view would find it very difficult to cater properly for the very top and the very bottom at the same time (teacher interview, July 2018).

Joshua also comments on the perceived impact on workload that mixed attainment teaching could create, but considers the pitfalls of labelling his students in terms of prior attainment:

> If you're teaching in a narrower range of ability, it's easier for the teacher to set the level of work and differentiate accordingly. I'm a strong advocate that you should never differentiate down, that you should always be 'this is the level we're going to work at, everyone is going to hit this level' and if some people need some more time and

> support, so be it. Differentiation by task, I think, is damaging. But differentiating that way, by time for the people who struggle to grasp it straightaway, and by, um, extension tasks and problem solving and application for those who are, um, grasping it quickly, I feel like that is far more achievable in a set class than a mixed ability group (teacher interview, July 2018).

Clarissa agrees that teaching in attainment groups "can be beneficial…because you can actually teach the topic in a particular way that you can build on their misconceptions and move them forward a lot quicker" (teacher interview, July 2018).

She is also concerned that some students in a mixed attainment group could be rendered invisible:

> And there are a lot of greys in the middle who would get lost. And I think that's really worrying with the greys. They're the ones who never stand out because their behaviour is always good. And they never answer a question…as an experienced teacher, you target those to make sure they are involved but they can get lost in a total mixed ability I feel (teacher interview, July 2018).

Other teachers in the study comment that teaching in attainment groups makes teaching more successful and achievable: "it gives the teacher a starting point as to where to pitch the lesson"; "I think we are just more qualified and set up for teaching sets"; "students can push each other on without feeling overwhelmed if their ability is lower"; "it facilitates more effective intervention"; "differentiation can be more tailored, planning can be more straightforward and instruction and feedback is relevant to more students"; "it helps me target students quickly to offer further support"; "teaching is easier to plan with setting", and "it can narrow the range in terms of content requirements which can ease some planning pressures" (teacher questionnaire, June 2018). These comments are similar to those made by teachers in Mazenod *et al*.,'s (2018) study in that teachers are concerned about 'over-stretching' students in lower attainment groupings, attributing their concern to students' lack of confidence and/or resilience. The teacher notion of 'ability' here may be limiting in contrast to a belief in potential.

Teachers, however, are aware that attainment grouping is still a form of mixed attainment teaching, wherein despite teaching in sets, they are still required to

differentiate their teaching materials, adapting their teaching to the needs of different learners.

Clarissa explains:

> Even though you set children of similar abilities, there's still a vast range, almost a mixed ability group within that setting. I know it sounds ridiculous; however, I think from my perspective it's easier to deal with. Because you can have a wide range of abilities even with in a top set - even within a topic. So, for me, setting is a vital starting point. It doesn't mean I have children of the same ability within that class, I still need to differentiate for that group. And that takes time to get to know your class (teacher interview, July 2018).

Daniella agrees by beginning her comments on attainment grouping with the phrase "I preface all of it with the fact that even if they're set, you've still got an ability range", and Joshua feels similarly that "all classes are mixed ability. But ability grouping allows the range of ability to be narrowed enabling the teacher to be more specific in their approach to the lesson". Hayley also suggests that "in any class anyway, they're mixed ability, aren't they? They're never all the same ability. Even if we've narrowed that down, we're always teaching mixed ability" (teacher interview, July 2018).

Francis *et al.*, (2017) also find that proponents of attainment grouping believe that separating students into ability grouping enables teachers to stretch higher attaining students and support students who are struggling, tailoring resources and strategies to the students in the group to maximise progress. However, the authors suggest that while small achievement gains may be made by placing higher attaining students in sets, the impact on lower attaining students is negative. A further negative impact of attainment grouping is that teachers can view students in sets as one homogenous group, believing that setting negates the need for differentiation (Ireson and Hallam, 2005).

Additionally, teachers comment on the need for attainment grouping to be fluid. Amelia believes "I think there's an argument for we start with mixed ability in Year 7 and see how it's going to work out". Her view is that grouping has "got to have some fluidity. If you set them at the start of Year 10 and say, that's you until the end of Year 11, that's rubbish" (teacher interview, July 2018). Furthermore, teachers

comment that “it is important that sets are dynamic and not static”; “students can feel ‘stuck’ if groupings are inflexible, which can create a negative climate for learning as they may lack the ability to see the potential they could achieve. It can lead to an overall negative perception of ability if in ‘low’ groups and sometimes restricted opportunities if the teacher is unable to facilitate a level of varying challenge”; “I also think that students perform differently across topic and skill areas so a strong student in one aspect of the course might struggle somewhere else and so the groupings need to be fluid” and “pupils can become ‘stuck’ in a group due to one poor assessment or because other subjects are involved before a change can be made” (teacher questionnaire, June 2018). Francis *et al.*, (2017) caution against lack of fluidity in attainment grouping, as students tend to remain in the same group when they have been placed there and find that teachers and schools tend to overestimate the extent of movement between sets.

Despite these comments, there is also evidence that some teachers feel setting is most beneficial to the highest attaining students, and that mixed attainment grouping would be most damaging to these students. Some teachers believe “I think you have to have some ability grouping, and I think the most able benefit”; “I’ve seen the advantage of having those really, really clever children together” and “some students enjoy working with those of a similar ability, particularly high achievers. It really works with the more able”; “it’s very difficult to push the ones at the top end. That’s the problem with mixed ability, you can’t stretch as easily”; “the positive effects favour higher attainers as lessons can consist of more challenging material” and “if you had full mixed ability it would be very difficult for a teacher to push the top end while still offering support” (teacher questionnaire, June 2018). However, these statements are made by teachers who teach predominantly in attainment groupings.

Although students from a range of attainment groupings are represented in the sample, several students in the study similarly express a preference for attainment grouping. They comment that “I like working in sets because everyone’s at the same level”; “when the teacher speaks, it’s for everyone, not for the people who are the best, or clever” and “I would prefer there to be sets because if someone gets put into a group, they’ll be learning Set 1 work and if you need Set 3 work, you won’t get any of it” (student questionnaire, June 2018). There is a possibility that some of these student responses may be a representation of their performance anxiety and lowered self-esteem (Ireson and Hallam, 2001)

Some teachers and students do express positive comments about mixed attainment teaching and have reservations about attainment grouping. Teachers remark “you can use the more able students to model things, even teach other students”; “maybe our expectations are lower because we don’t assume set 3 kids aren’t going to be talented”; “if we could teach in mixed ability, I would do it; I just don’t believe we can” (teacher interview, July 2018). From a student’s point of view: “I would like to be with Set 1 people because then I would get to learn more because they are more clever” (student questionnaire, June 2018).

Daniella suggests another advantage to mixed attainment groups which is that “with mixed ability you can separate based on personality rather than ability which gives more flexibility if you have students who don’t work well together, you know, from a behaviour for learning point of view” (teacher interview, July 2018). One teacher believes that:

> Students are not usually 100% good at everything. Attainment groupings don't necessarily allow for particular talents or abilities. Also, for lower ability students that can be a lack of evidence of aspirational material that they can use to improve their own performance. I feel it can be limiting rather than empowering at times (teacher questionnaire, July 2018).

In the research literature, one of the practices of Rubie-Davies *et al.*,*’s* (2015) high-expectation teachers is that students are not grouped by ability for learning activities. In most classes, students choose their own activities, and all students are involved in challenging learning experiences. Archer *et al*., (2018) find that attainment grouping in particular highlights the inequity of English secondary schools, as pupils in high-attaining sets make more progress and have greater self-confidence, whereas pupils in lower-attaining sets are provided with an impoverished curriculum by comparison. Boaler *et al.*, (2000) posit that activities provided for low-attaining groups rarely involve the use of analytical skills or independence, whereas students in high-attaining classes experience sustained, responsive teaching, with challenging activities that encourage analytical thinking. Additionally, schools may allocate the most knowledgeable and experienced teachers to higher-attaining groups (Oakes, 2005). Students placed in sets above their assessed level of attainment make more progress than students of equivalent ability who are placed in lower sets. Conversely, placing students in groups below their level of attainment reduces their progress (Ireson, Hallam and Hurley, 2005).

PISA (2010) studies have also found that the earlier children experience attainment grouping within an educational system, the more likely the gap in educational attainment between those from high and low socio-economic backgrounds. Grouping practices within classrooms may offer greater flexibility in terms of movement between groupings and greater opportunities for sustained interactions with teachers and peers (Adey and Dillon, 2012).

Although it may be assumed that setting is based in students' prior attainment, this may not necessarily be the case, as subjective judgements may also be used to decide students' setting (Muijs and Dunne, 2010). Teachers may also be conflating lower performance with lower literacy, lower comprehension or lower retention and processing skills. Therefore, allocation to sets should be transparent and based on prior attainment rather than subjective judgements. Movements between sets should not be constrained, so that students can move between sets to allow for greater equity (Mujis and Dunne, 2010).

ii) Consequences and impact of attainment grouping

Grouping is related to behaviour in comments made by both teachers and students. This may be because grouping is based on particular behaviours or that grouping influences particular behaviours. Student behaviour, and particularly combinations of student personalities, is given as one rationale for grouping decisions and is also related to student motivation in addition to attainment grouping.

Rosa finds that grouping according to a combination of personalities is more impactful than attainment grouping in one group she teaches:

> First of all, we put them in ability groups, and obviously if they work, we keep them like that. So, currently in Year 8, they are in two sets and they're fairly similar. And they're like teaching dream children! The other Year 8s are a nightmare. So we've had them in ability sets, doesn't work because of personalities. So we've had to split personalities regardless of their ability, so bringing poor attitude and behaviour into a high ability set hoping that the "nicer" behaviours will rub off. It can still be incredibly disruptive, it's really, really hard because in the lower group you've got really poor ability and some poor behaviour. So it's still not cut and dry, it really is not. And it's

> lesson by lesson and we actually change the activity according to the individuals (teacher interview, June 2018).

Similarly, one teacher comments that "I often seat students next to a peer of similar ability if that is possible, but behaviour is usually my key factor in deciding where a student sits" (teacher questionnaire, June 2018).

Amelia feels that the importance of students' behaviour to grouping is not just of concern to teachers:

> Interestingly, I talked to a pupil the other day who said 'Miss, why don't you set by behaviour?' This was a Year 9. I asked what he meant and he said 'Why can't you just have people who want to work and people who don't want to work? And the people who don't want to work, clever or not, just get in the same group?'. And I pointed out that would be a nightmare from a teacher's point of view. And he said that would be their own fault if they didn't want to learn. And he was perfectly serious. People who might not be great with ability but want to work are put together, and if anyone messes about, it was like, can't we just forget about them? And they get what they deserve. Obviously not really understanding the complexities of behaviour, but from a pupil point of view, I don't want to be in a class with people messing around. We'd just had a normal lesson, but at the end, it's like he'd just been thinking…
>
> Interviewer: So he's not interested in sets, just being with people who want to work?
>
> Amelia: Yes. And this was pretty much a bottom set pupil. Not a high-flyer who doesn't want to be distracted, but someone who wants to work hard and have their best chance (teacher interview, June 2018).

In terms of student experience, this is contrary to the findings of Taylor *et al.*, (2017), in which students report they are unhappy with set placement and develop low self-confidence. The student in this case is more concerned with the impact of others on his academic outcomes, although it is important to remember that other students in the class may be expressing their dissatisfaction with their set placement, and lack of agency, through rebellious behaviour (Mazenod *et al.*,

2018). This may also be a consequence of the small sample size in this study, which may not be fully representative of views in the wider school population.

Amelia also explains the impact that dealing with low-level disruption can have on teaching staff.

> When it's such minor stuff, it's incredibly time-consuming. And I know because I'm a tutor they're doing it all round the school. Every teacher is fighting the battle individually. And I know the systems are in place, but it gets to the point, do you know I teach hundreds of pupils a day, and I can't log it all. And it does seem petty. I dunno. The only kudos I've got here is that I've been here for decades and I'm quite strict, and I've got that reputation which I've carefully cultivated! But I shouldn't have to rely on that (teacher interview, July 2018).

Hayley also feels there is a connection between behaviour and attainment:

> I think for me though, behaviour and ability – this is probably wrong – they are so entwined, aren't they? And that's not fair. Because, say in my Year 8 group, they're not top, it's set two slash three, because I've got a bouncy group, a massive group who need to focus, I think I can be honest, I feel like my expectations have had to lower because of some of the behaviour (teacher interview, July 2018).

My research diary notes the apologetic tone that Hayley used during this response; she may have found the reflection difficult. I therefore responded using active listening, and suspended judgement to fully hear Hayley's viewpoint.

Students in the sample echo the same concerns about the impact of poor student behaviour as teachers and as the student in Amelia's class. Year 9 students Maddie and Georgia believe there is a difference in the expectation of student behaviour depending on the set the student is in:

> Maddie: In this class you're told to get high marks and to stay on task, and you've got higher expectations from your teacher and the rest of your class to do well, so if you're in a lower set and there are some students who aren't on task and they don't feel they are gonna get that grade, they're going to bring everyone else down, and the teachers, they don't ignore it…

Georgia: But they don't recognise it.

Maddie: Or try and prevent it (student focus group, July 2018).

Students from all attainment groupings comment that disruptive behaviour "definitely depends on the class and whether it's set or not" and that "I work best when I'm among people who want to work really hard as well" (student questionnaire, June 2018).

It is evident that the current educational climate is dominated by concerns about standards and testing (Ball and Olmedo, 2013; Solomon and Lewin, 2016). Some students may be responding to their fear of academic failure exacerbated by this climate by adopting strategies that deflect attention from their academic struggles (Jackson, 2006). Disruptive classroom behaviours could be an example of the blurring of the relationship between failure and a lack of ability, and while students might jeopardise their own success, they also make learning difficult for others in the class. This could also include refusal to make an effort to work. Covington and Teel (1996) suggest that reducing competition in schools is necessary if defensive behaviours are to be reduced and that learning is the first casualty in highly competitive school environments.

4.5 Teaching strategies to remove barriers to achievement, and the belief that all students can achieve their potential

i) The belief that all students can achieve their potential

In addition to exploring the barriers to creating a culture of high expectation, the research questions also aim to explore teachers' and students' perceptions of teacher expectations in the workplace, and the strategies teachers and students believe teachers use to create a culture of high expectation. As a consequence, this theme aims to explore the range of strategies teachers use, with the aim of trying to remove barriers to academic achievement.

. Many teachers in the sample hold the view that all students are capable of achieving their best with the right support. Teachers comment that they believe "all students can achieve, we must strive to give them the skills with which to succeed"; "I want them to get the best grade that they are capable of"; "all students can

achieve academic success", and "I want students to achieve within their capabilities and more if possible" (teacher questionnaire, June 2018).

Teachers in the sample are aware that success may look different for different learners. As one teacher explains:

> I want all of my students to achieve the best grade they are capable of. Sometimes a hard-earned E can be more satisfying than the A grade because of the hard work and dedication that grade represents to that student (teacher questionnaire, June 2018).

Teachers also comment that they "expect all students to have some academic success. This will vary depending on the level of the student"; "some students arrive a few years behind where they should be, but our expectations are not any different" and "the end goal is no different as the aim is to catch up". Teachers believe the 'end goal' goes beyond students' academic qualifications, however. They comment that students should "be able to access the future course and employment they aspire to and will feel satisfied and motivated to be positive about education and lifelong learners" and that they "expect them to succeed, academically, but also to have the skills and character to succeed in life beyond school". In one teacher's words, "it's about enabling that student to move on to the next stage of their academic career or their life with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed there" (teacher questionnaire, June 2018). These findings are contrary to those which suggest teachers tend to have lower expectations of student in lower attainment groups (Mazenod *et al.,* 2018) and, instead, draw on the idea of transformability, and on the principle that teachers can enhance students' capacity for learning instead of relying on predetermined notions about capability (Hart, 2004).

Student explanations of what is expected of them show that they believe they are expected to try their hardest. They comment that teachers expect them to "do your best"; to do "the best that you as a student can"; to "put a high effort into my work"; that "I think that they expect me to always try and give it 100%" and even that they expect students to "get the task in hand done well and do a bit extra". Some students also believe that there is a clear connection between the effort they put into their schoolwork and their academic success. Students comment that they are expected to achieve "high grades and meaningful answers to questions that I have thought of myself"; "I think all my teachers expect me to achieve a grade that I am

content with after having tried my best in class", and the affirming statement, "teachers just want the best I can do" (student questionnaire, June 2018).

Some students believe that academic effort is paramount to success: "I believe that all students can do well at school but it is their work ethic and their desire to seek the help they need that determines this", and "if you put your mind to it and listen and compete the work I feel you can do well at school". Similarly to teachers in the sample, some students believe they are expected to achieve more than academic success at school: they are expected to be "nice, kind and helpful"; 'to behave well"; to be "kind, quiet and helpful", and to "always try your best with good behaviour". One student who perhaps feels the expectations of them are too much comments that "they expect more than I think I can achieve" (student questionnaire, June 2018).

ii) Teaching strategies to remove barriers to achievement

Teachers use a range of strategies with the aim of removing barriers to achievement. Several teachers use praise and positive language in the classroom, with the aim of encouraging and motivating learners. As Clarissa says:

> They put quite a lot of limits on themselves, and I think it's our job to, to actually take those limits away. I think praise is a really important aspect, but you've got to be careful that you're not saying 'well done everybody', it's got to be specific, and something that everyone can take from. Because you see them beam! (teacher interview, July 2018).

Abbie similarly builds her students' confidence through her dialogue with them, and through her careful use of positive language in the classroom:

> I think that it's that dialogue with them as learners that shows I have confidence in them, and that I think they can do this. And I think sometimes for them it's about rephrasing. So with that group of girls in particular, they often start a discussion with me with 'I think I've got this wrong, but can you check it?' or 'I don't know if I've got it right', it's always quite negative and so I verbally get them to rephrase. And I'll say, 'No. Instead, I want you to say to me – I've done the best I

> can, what can I do next?' and that's such a small thing, but it's really powerful (teacher interview, July 2018).

Several teachers comment on student achievement as motivational and explain how they ensure their learners experience success. Rosa says "I expect the kids to try and have confidence in their abilities. I want to encourage them, and then they're surprised, the smile on their face when they're succeeding! Everybody can do it, it's all achievable. I wouldn't make it so they couldn't do it" (teacher interview, July 2018).

Joshua believes that motivation and achievement are bi-directional. He states:

> I always used to believe that if you were motivated, you'd be successful. It's been a game-changer for me that it's far more likely to be the other way round. Even in a low ability set, you can make people feel successful at that level, and still stretch and challenge them if you take something back to very basic principles that they will understand, and you can grow things from there. You perhaps get them to answer one or two questions that they will fly through, but you make them feel successful, I think that's perhaps one of the better ways to overcome that (teacher interview, July 2018).

Conversely, Clarissa comments on the impact on students' motivation when they have never been given the opportunity to achieve: "some of it's that they've never had the opportunity to explore what they can do because they've always had it wrong, so you don't try, because you give up because it's wrong" (teacher interview, July 2018).

One of the classroom strategies teachers use to ensure their students are achieving is scaffolding learning to support learners who may be struggling. Teachers say "I look at my planned outcomes and look at the building blocks and scaffolding I would need to put in to reach it"; they "have extension tasks and scaffolding ready if needed"; that they "try and provide resources that will support or stretch learners, varying degrees of scaffolding and challenge"; they "have more scaffolding available for some students", and that they "produce support and scaffold resources" (teacher questionnaire, June 2018). Clarissa summarises the relationship between scaffolding and achievement in the classroom:

> If kids are feeling like the scaffolding's right there, they'll have a go…and they may have thought of something, and someone else may think 'Oh, I've always done it that way and got it right', but their idea may be really, really intuitive and might actually be a quicker solution (teacher interview, July 2018).

It is an interesting finding that teachers in this study are confident in their use of classroom practices to support and challenge their learners but are sometimes apprehensive about their ability to teach mixed attainment classes. At a time of curriculum change and with the introduction of new examination specifications (DfE, 2015), workload pressures may be a factor here, as well as the perceived difficulty of meeting the needs of all learners in the classroom when their needs are considered to be multifarious (Taylor *et al.*, 2017).

In terms of the research literature, a further instructional practice connected to high-expectation teachers is to orient students to the lesson and link new concepts with prior knowledge. Rubie-Davies (2015) suggests that this approach ensures teachers can check what students already know, in addition to providing focus on the current task. Statements linking new concepts with prior learning provide a framework and scaffolding for learning, which can improve student learning of new concepts by ensuring students have a clear understanding of the concepts being introduced (Wray *et al.*, 2000; Berliner, 2004; Topping and Ferguson, 2005).

Teacher feedback plays a key role in this process as the information given needs to be based on the student's current understanding or progress. If the feedback is too far beyond the student's current conceptions, they may not be able to make the adjustments needed in relation to their goal (Rubie-Davies, 2015). Similarly, Rosenshine (2012) finds that a review of learning aids students' recall of knowledge and concepts required for the lesson, and providing students with scaffolding will help them learn difficult tasks in addition to spending time presenting new material and guiding practice.

Other teachers use classroom systems and routine with the aim of ensuring all students can feel confident and secure to take risks in their learning. Clarissa says:

> I think you have to set your ground rules at the start. They might not like you at first, but they have to know where the boundaries are. Once they're set, then you can relax, and the climate comes from 'you won't tolerate any nonsense, and everyone is safe to learn.

> Nobody's stupid', you know, because some of these lower set classes can be quite nasty to each other. I won't have that. No question's not important, everyone's entitled to ask, and even if it is a daft question, if you like, you say 'oh that's interesting' and you turn it round the other way so that everyone's point of view is important, and they are confident enough to open up so you can understand why they don't understand, because that's half the battle (teacher interview, July 2018).

Daniella is in agreement about the importance of setting ground rules:

> to my mind, relationships can be sort of warm and friendly, but they're warm and friendly to get that work out of the students (teacher interview, July 2018).

The importance of relationships in the classroom is explored further in the final theme in the analysis.

4.6 Peer and teacher–student relationships: the value of authenticity and being known

i) Peer relationships

As the research aims to offer greater insight into teaching beliefs and strategies that are perceived as creating a culture of high expectation, I have reflected that underpinning many of the themes discussed thus far is the value of peer and teacher–student relationships, including the merit of authenticity and the importance of being known. Rogers and Gunter (2012) explain that the use of data sets and target setting for students is a rational solution to improving standards of education. However, they remind us that teaching is a relational practice and that we should ask questions about the way power operates, not least through how young people experience and witness how they are sorted and re-sorted through internal and external league tables. Teachers and students in this study comment on the importance of the relationships between the groups they are working in.

Teacher Amelia works hard on the social cohesion in her classes, commenting that she "tries to make them a *group*. If they're all in splendid isolation, it's hard." (teacher interview, July 2018). Rosa also acknowledges the importance of peer

relationships to students and reassures them that “in the lessons now, we get them to choose a pair and keep them in the same team. We say, ‘You will be with your friend’, so they’ve got somebody” (teacher interview, July 2018).

Students in the sample gave their own perspective on the importance of peer relationships to their academic work. They explain that “it helps when you’re in a group with people you like”, and “I would rather be in a group with a couple of people I trust and get on with”; “It would be nicer if we were all together”, and “I would rather be with my friends”. For some students, however, they see being in groups with friends as unnecessary: “I like to be with people I work well with…I just want to get on with the work” and “personally, I work best when I’m among people who want to work really hard as well”. Some students are altruistic in their approach to grouping: “I would like to be with Set 3 people to help them” and “I think it’s good to be with people you don’t know to get to know them better” (student questionnaire, June 2018).

Year 9 student Maddie suggests a reason for the importance of positive peer relationships:

> I think that teachers don’t know you in the same way that your classmates do. You spend nearly all the time with your classmates and at the most, five hours in a week with your teacher. So they don’t really understand what your character is like. They see a snapshot for an hour or so. But your other students see that you’re the person who wants to get on with your work, and that you may need help sometimes (student focus group, July 2018).

Peer relationships, however, are not always straightforward. As Rosa explains: “They’re lovely but they’ve got a lot going on in their social lives, they’re all falling out and calling each other names” (teacher interview, July 2018). Clarissa agrees that “some of the classes can be quite nasty to each other” (teacher interview, July 2018), and Daniella aims to establish clear expectations with her classes from the outset: “it’s essentially around that one word, you know, making it clear I have respect for them, they need to have respect for each other and they need to have respect for me” (teacher interview, July 2018). As one Year 9 student posits, “social life is very important at this age and can get in the way of schoolwork” (student questionnaire, June 2018). Student Hannah also believes peer relationships can have a negative impact on schoolwork.

> Hannah: Um, I think some people are genuinely stupid and others are smart. Or they act stupid.
>
> Interviewer: Why do you think they might do that?
>
> Hannah: Because they try to be like their friends, and they try to be who they're not (student focus group, July 2018).

Blakemore (2018) comments on the long history of social psychology research on the importance of peers in adolescence and explains that at this stage in their development, adolescents spend more time with their friends and less with parents and other family members. At this age, they care more deeply about what their friends think of them, and this can affect their self-worth; they are hypersensitive to social exclusion. This may explain why students' relationships with their peers are so important to them and, at times, fraught.

ii) Teacher–student relationships

A further important dynamic existing in the classroom is the importance of teacher–student relationships. Teachers in the study comment on the ways they nurture these relationships and show their students that they care. Examples of ways teachers achieve this are: "I always try and make eye contact with every student in the room" and "I think you have to show you're interested in them" (teacher interviews, July 2018).

Hayley sees her relationships with the students she teaches as pivotal to her role:

> Obviously, I feel passionately about my subject but the thing I get the most from is the relationship with the kids, it's the positivity from that. For that for me, if I'm failing with a kid that's something I'd always have to address…I mean, it's just natural isn't it? I rely on us all getting along, and if someone oversteps the mark, they kind of feel a bit ashamed, because normally we're all having a nice time (teacher interview, July 2018).

Rosa similarly finds teacher–student relationships are of utmost importance:

> Having an individual preference and interest, and breaking the ice with that child there, you've got them. And it's showing an interest in

> them isn't it? Having that relationship is one really important thing. It's about being decent to the children (teacher interview, July 2018).

iii) Authenticity and being known

Teachers and students are concerned with authenticity and the importance of students being known and understood as individuals. Students are uncomfortable with being judged as someone they are not, and for these concerns, being in the 'right' set is more important than the set itself: "You might find it hard to be in a set that doesn't suit you, you might want to get to a set where it's more your level", and "people judge you before they get to know you, people assume you're smart when you're not" (student questionnaire, June 2018). Maddie feels that "sometimes the teachers expect too much of me but that's only in situations where the teachers don't know their students" (student focus group, July 2018). The importance of being known is echoed by Hannah who explains that "one of our science teachers, he knows our expectations but as soon as we get a supply teacher, she'll give us five different sheets and she doesn't let us talk about the work" (student focus group, July 2018). Georgia feels her more introverted personality can be a barrier to being known: "it depends on the subject and on the teacher, so for example, when there are more vocal people in the class, I'm not sure that the teacher understands that I really want to do well in that subject" (student focus group, July 2018).

Teachers similarly believe that data and numbers can only inform them about a student in a partial sense. They comment that: "over-reliance on data can be a problem. You need to know pupils based on your subject, not what other people's expectation or knowledge of them are"; "we should be prepared for the unexpected in the classroom and don't assume. They all have strengths and weaknesses" and "it's so based on the individual. Just because they think they are somewhere, doesn't mean they are" (teacher questionnaire, June 2018).

The final practice of high-expectation teachers as defined by Rubie-Davies *et al.*, (2015) is the creation of a warm classroom climate where teachers are supportive of students, engage with them constructively and manage behaviour positively. Noddings (2012) suggests that creating a climate in which caring relations can flourish should be a goal for every teacher, as this relationship is the foundation of everything teachers do. Wentzel (1997) posits that students will be motivated to

engage in classroom activities if they believe their teachers care about them, describing characteristics of such teachers as having democratic interaction styles, developing expectations for student behaviour in light of individual differences, modelling a caring attitude towards their own work, and providing constructive feedback. The quality of teacher–student relationships, along with other teacher factors, can promote school success and can be particularly important for students who are academically at risk (Roorda and Koomen, 2011). Furthermore, teachers may impact on skills aside from test scores that affect their long-term success (Jackson, 2016).

As Ireson and Hallam (2005) suggest, from a psychological perspective, affective aspects of development and interpersonal relationships provide a basis for the development of autonomous learning. Students who feel supported in the school community are more likely to be intrinsically motivated, as a sense of belonging influences motivation and thus indirectly affects effort, participation, and subsequent achievement. Conversely, teachers' interactions tend to favour students who are deemed to be academically strong, giving these students more praise and more feedback on their feedback, as well as more positive interaction (Bressoux and Pansu, 2016). In classrooms in which teachers are perceived to give low-attaining students less emotional support, students report a negative reaction to them, although the teachers' positive intent may not be recognised (Babad, 1993). Muller, Katz and Dance (1999) report that students feel it is important to have teachers who care about them. They want their teachers to be able to believe that they can do good work and to demand it from them.

The teacher–student relationship is not equal by its nature, but this does not mean that the establishment and maintenance of caring is not of paramount importance. In a caring climate, teachers can best meet individual needs, impart knowledge and encourage the development of morality (Noddings, 2012). Several authors have suggested that a feeling of belonging and being cared for can foster the adoption and internalisation of goals and values (Connell and Wellborn, 1991; Noddings, 1992; Baumeister and Leary, 1995). Students, therefore, may be more motivated to engage in classroom activities if they believe that teachers care about them (Wentzel, 1997).

4.7 Reflections

Research question 1 asks what teachers' and students' perceptions are of high teacher expectation in the workplace. To summarise the key claims from the thematic analysis of the data collected in the case study, these include the belief that all students can achieve high educational attainment, and the creation of a warm and supportive classroom climate. Research question 2 asks what strategies teachers and students believe teachers use to create a culture of high expectation. The key claims from the analysis are that there are a range of teaching strategies and practices used by the teachers that are associated with high teacher expectations (Rubie-Davies *et al.*, 2015). These include teachers' use of questioning and the role of feedback closely linked with goal setting.

Research question 3 asks about the perceived barriers to creating a culture of high expectation. Participants believe that there are barriers to creating a culture of high expectation. These include the perceived impact of students' home environment, students' behaviour and levels of motivation, resilience and self-regulation, the complexities of teaching with appropriate pace and levels of challenge, and large class sizes. Further barriers are created by the impact of labelling on student self-perception and behaviours, and the perceived consequences of attainment groupings.

However, as discussed in Chapter 2 above, definitions of 'high teacher expectation' are not universally agreed, and can also be defined and shaped through government policy, professional regulation and performance management, and notions of professional identity. Therefore, in the subsequent chapter, I will now analyse the perceived barriers to creating a culture of high expectation through the theories of Bourdieu, explaining why I have found Bourdieu's work so impactful on my thinking, and how through viewing the data collected for this study through a second, Bourdieusian lens, I have gained a deeper understanding of it. Richardson (1994) comments that, through writing, we can never accurately and precisely capture the studied world. Returning to Richardson's concept of crystallisation, using thematic analysis to explore the data did not satisfy my desire to find a view of the 'truth'. This lens is merely one angle from which to view the data, and thus provides one partial understanding of the topic. Shah (1994) similarly describes the infinite possibilities in capturing individual accounts as a researcher, commenting

that each is as unique, elusive and difficult to portray as the myriad possible images generated by a kaleidoscope.

Essentially, I felt that the thematic analysis lacked emphasis of the crucial role that values play in educational practice (Biesta, 2015). Following the use of thematic analysis to analyse the data, the initial anger I felt when I first began researching the topic of high teacher expectation remained unexplained and unexamined. The stories told by the research participants did not yet meet a democratic agenda (Kushner, 2017), nor was the phenomena fully scrutinised in terms of social justice (Grenfell, 2014). This led me to the second, Bourdiesian lens, explored in the subsequent chapter.

Chapter 5: Teacher and student notions of what helps and what hinders high expectation teaching and learning practices: a Bourdieusian discussion

In the previous chapter, I explored the key claims from the thematic analysis of the data collected in the case study, that there are a range of teaching strategies and practices used by the teachers that are associated with high teacher expectations (Rubie-Davies *et al.*, 2015). Participants, however, also believe that there are barriers to creating a culture of high expectation.

In this chapter, I will explore how, in terms of these perceived barriers, reading the theories of Bourdieu to help make sense of wider issues of inequality was a revelatory experience for me as a researcher. Bourdieu's methodology and concepts led me to put common sense interpretations of social phenomena under scrutiny, and uncover their generating structures (Grenfell, 2014). The prevailing narrative throughout my career has been that education should not generate social inequality and that it does not have to, and that action to overcome this effect is about identifying and then removing the 'barriers', or perhaps 'raising standards for all' (James, 2015). Reading Bourdieu clearly counters this view, and reading the data collected for my case study through a Bourdieusian lens was akin to finding a missing piece of the puzzle in terms of gaining a deeper understanding of the data collected for this study.

The reflexivity required here deepened my awareness of the research problematics, but also meant I had to seek out my own subjectivity (Peshkin, 1998) in terms of recognising my own privileged position in the world. This felt uncomfortable as I re-assessed my personal values and beliefs, and meant that I had to accept the existence of different realities (Greenbank, 2003). This process of seeing things differently, of making the familiar strange, resulted in different insights into the research data, and a deeper exploration of the research aim of exploring the barriers to creating a culture of high expectation.

5.1 Forms of capital

Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction, ensuring the self-perpetuation of social structures over time, and cultural capital, the knowledge, skills and behaviour we possess by belonging as part of a social group explains that the culture of the dominant class is rewarded by the education system (Bourdieu and Passeron,

1977). Schools do not provide their students with the ability to receive and internalise cultural capital (Dumias, 2002); therefore, the acquisition of cultural capital and its consequent academic rewards is in part inherited from family (Bourdieu, 1973). Cultural capital, therefore, serves as a power resource: it is a vehicle for certain groups to remain dominant. For Bourdieu, habitus and capital will reproduce themselves, as the environment influences the next generation's habitus and cultural capital. Specifically, institutionalised capital refers to academic qualifications which enable an individual to directly convert cultural capital to economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). The values shared among dominant groups are believed to be legitimate; therefore, the dominant group will ensure these are reproduced to secure their position (Bourdieu, 1992).

Through a Bourdieusian perspective, academic capital is the product of the combined effects of cultural transmission by the family and the school (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984). Consequently, if students' cultural capital is similar to that as defined by the school, they are in an advantageous position. This is further legitimised as students from similar backgrounds will have been exposed to similar environments (Bourdieu, 2002). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) describe the school system as a field; working hard at school and attempting to academically achieve highly are practices in this field. Dumias (2002) suggests that students' decision to invest in their education in this way can depend on their place in the class system, as academic success is directly dependant on cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1973). Furthermore, students may have expectations of whether people from similar backgrounds to theirs tend to be successful academically (Swartz, 1997). Some students, however, may see the accumulation of cultural capital as a way to overcome the obstacles that may be placed in their way, and therefore construct a viable identity which allows them to feel a greater sense of belonging (Dumais, 2002; Bathmaker *et al.*, 2013).

Bourdieu's (2002) discussion on the main, relational forms of capital: economic, social and cultural, can be applied to comments from several teachers in this study, who suggest that home environment can be an enabler of learning or a barrier of learning, dependant on the type of background it is. This is perceived as either placing limitations on practical support to study, such as lack of access to computing equipment or reading materials, but also on parental aspirations for their children, such as teacher Abbie's comment regarding raising student aspirations in her classroom: "if they haven't got that support at home to raise their aspirations,

sometimes it can take a while" (teacher interview, July 2018). Teacher Joshua is also aware of the impact of capital:

> Often students who have more intelligent or better-off parents will have had greater opportunities to benefit from learning background knowledge. For some students they have to rely on only knowledge and skills developed in school. Because learning new information depends on the level of prior background knowledge, it must follow that some students find it easier to succeed academically than others (teacher questionnaire, June 2018).

Teacher Alice explains the connection between capital and students' academic success:

> I think there are many factors that contribute to the academic success of a student beyond their intelligence. Their family background, their health and mental well-being, social class, and previous educational experiences all impact on their ability to succeed academically (teacher questionnaire, June 2018).

Teacher Hayley comments on deficit in terms of capital when discussing barriers to learning, commenting that

> Is that to do with home environment? I don't know, it's almost a cultural thing (teacher interview, July 2018).

Teacher Daniella comments on the power of capital in terms of the benefit of having a clear understanding of the hidden language inherent in school institutions:

> I think those who can read body language and get a sense of the situation without being told are going to benefit, because they understand those social rules. And benefit those who have that structure at home, whether you can link that with disadvantage or not. They're not going to know (teacher interview, July 2018).

A related view is that the types of discourse teachers use to educate students favours those who are already exposed to that language at home. This inequity can be seen in Year 9 student Caitlin's comment:

> The teacher says all these words and things and then says, 'Right, what is this?' and it's too fast, it's too much. They need to be slower (student focus group, July 2018).

Bourdieu emphasises that schools teach certain subjects in certain ways, and with certain forms of judgement. The knowledge and understanding needed for success in academic learning, however, is not explicitly taught; therefore, those who succeed are already equipped with this capital by virtue of their backgrounds (Bourdieu, 1976). A Bourdieusian reading may suggest that middle-class cultural capital is privileged over all (Reay, 1998). By exemplifying the culture of the middle-class, the school system consecrates it (Grenfell, 2014), and the medium for this is language (Bourdieu, 1991).

Student Maddie understands the significance of middle-class parental expectations:

> The teachers have expectations and the students have expectations, and you've also got their parents. Parents use it as a sort of leeway (student focus group, July 2018).

Therefore, in middle-class families, Maddie perceives that parental expectations are used as a bargaining tool to encourage compliance and academic achievement. Middle-class parents may wish to ensure that their children develop aspirations and practices that lead to academic success, and compliant behaviour can be seen as advantageous to secure this.

5.2 The concept of meritocracy and its complexities

The concept of meritocracy can be defined as a social system within which individuals earn rewards according to their abilities and efforts. Differences in power and the distribution of resources can, therefore, be justified by the presumption that everyone has the chance of success through their individual merit. Thus, both in political discourse and within the education system, the absolution of the system is justified through the notion of a meritocratic society (Goodall, 2019).

Jenson (2010) argues that this denial of the role of privilege in the success of individuals does not engage with the effects of class, social hierarchy or wealth. Language used by both students and teachers in my own study demonstrates how some participants are convinced by the concept of meritocracy. Students comment:

"I believe that all students can do well at school but it is their work ethic…that determines this", and "if you put your mind to it and listen and complete the work I feel you can do well" (student questionnaire, June 2018). Several teachers are equally as optimistic and ambitious for their students: "I want them to get the best grade they are capable of"; "all students can achieve academic success"; I expect all of my students to achieve as well as is possible", and "the end goal is no different, as the aim is to catch up" (teacher questionnaire, June 2018).

Therefore, according to the concept of meritocracy, the ability or not to succeed lies within the individual or the family (Goodall, 2019). Webb, Schimto and Danaher (2002) refer to the hegemonic view of schooling, suggesting that the role of schools is to reinforce the idea that the existing social relations are just and natural. In Bourdieu's work, this can be seen as the concept of doxa, which refers to the misrecognition of forms of social arbitrariness which creates the recognition of that same social arbitrariness (Bourdieu, 1977). This may encourage students to believe that their peers achieve higher results solely because they work harder, or because they are 'naturally' good at certain subjects.

Goodall (2019) suggests that parents are expected to raise their children in socially acceptable ways that will also overcome structural disadvantages such as poverty. This expectation is evident in this study through teacher Daniella's comments "that firm structure is particularly important for students that don't necessarily have it at home" and, on setting clear boundaries in the classroom, "I wonder if it almost has an impact on the more disadvantaged students" (teacher interview, July 2018). This view could be further exacerbated by the fact that teachers tend to come from relatively privileged backgrounds. Many teachers train to teach in universities and schools that encourage class invisibility; there may be a predominantly middle-class profile among their higher education institutions, and the nationally prescribed standards for Qualified Teacher Status in England (DfE, 2011) places an emphasis upon the technical aspects of teaching, with limited exposure to ideas about the connection between education and social class (Hall and Jones, 2013). In contrast, teacher training courses may have previously included advocacy for opportunities for all through comprehensive schooling (Simon, 1999). Therefore, teachers who are currently practising may be disposed to favour students who share their values and attitudes (Webb, Schimto and Danaher, 2002).

Goodall (2019) suggests that education may be perceived as an engine of social mobility, but this cannot be the case if it is part of a system informed by a discourse

of poverty. The author warns us of the dangers of the embedded nature of this discourse as it allows a simplistic analysis of inequity and disadvantage, placing blame for poverty on individual parents and families rather than on systemic issues. Therefore, stating “parental support” as a barrier to achievement also absolves the system.

The expression of a deficit model of parenting is not present in all respondents. Teacher Rosa vocalises her empathy to the stressors created by poverty: “they’ve got such problems…and I’m thinking, how much lower can we drive this child into the ground?” (teacher interview, July 2018). The use of this idiom expresses concern for young people and their wellbeing, rather than choosing to ignore their subjugation at the hands of structural inequities.

Successive governments have attempted to improve the life chances of children by supporting parental practices, partially with the intention of saving the state money in the long term, and perhaps with the further intention of producing active citizens of the future who are good for the state (Wainwright and Marandet, 2017). Despite these attempts, families have also been targeted by cuts to state support, whilst being increasingly relied on to deliver aspects of social change (Jupp, 2017). In addition, the concept of teaching parenting skills is often decontextualised; parenting for different families in different situations will require different skills (Gillies, 2005). Educational interventions may be seen to as regulating parents to ensure they produce ‘responsible’ future citizens (Henricson, 2003; Lister, 2006). This could be interpreted as the politicisation and professionalisation of parenting (Klett-Davis, 2010).

Structural inequities may have been further exacerbated in the context of this research by the nature of examination reform. Under the Conservative-Liberal coalition government of 2010, and also subsequent Conservative governments, schools have been encouraged to prioritise the teaching of more ‘traditional’ subjects, including English language and literature, maths, the sciences, geography or history and a language; referred to as English Baccalaureate subjects. These subjects are perceived as more academic, and studying them is seen as a way of raising standards as well as expectations. These subjects have until recently also been facilitating subjects for Russell Group universities, and they are, therefore, perceived as a vehicle for social mobility (Harris, 2013). There may be unintended consequences to curriculum reforms for school leaders who choose to optimise their school’s performance, as disadvantaged students may have restricted access

to certain areas of the curriculum (Harris, Downey and Burn, 2012; Tinsley and Board, 2017).

Consequences of curriculum and examination reform are evident in teachers' comments that: "some students have more support at home. In my subject, those who read more widely and have a varied vocabulary succeed"; "often students who have more intelligent, or more well-off parents will have had greater opportunities to benefit from learning background knowledge" and "in a recent year 9 student voice exercise, those with parental support had made significant progress compared to some (not all) Pupil Premium students who did not consider this a method to succeed" (teacher questionnaire, June 2018). One teacher comments specifically on the impact of curriculum reform on the students she teaches:

> Some have low self-esteem and seem convinced that they are going to fail. This seems more prevalent at GCSE than A-level where students already know they can succeed. The new GCSEs have also caused some students to think they will not cope (teacher questionnaire, June 2018).

This type of social determinism is a common criticism of Bourdieusian social theory. However, Bourdieu (1992) argues that in times of change, habitus can become relational, and changing or breaking it is possible. Similarly, the relational power of capital and context could be a defence against any charges of structural determinism made against Bourdieusian theory. The nature and experience of upward social mobility is complex, however, and a reductive discussion of deficit and disadvantage is potentially unhelpful.

5.3 Attainment grouping and its relation to competition and habitus

Several teachers in the study comment on the challenges of meeting the needs of all learners in the classroom, making statements such as they would find it "very difficult to cater properly for the very top and the very bottom at the same time" and "if you're teaching in a narrower range of ability it's easier for the teacher to set the level of work and differentiate accordingly" (teacher questionnaire, June 2018). This is similar to the findings of Taylor *et al.*, (2017); teachers perceive a difficulty in meeting the needs of all learners in the classroom.

Teacher Clarissa's reflections on attainment grouping summarise the positionality of many teachers in this study:

> From an educational point of view of actually improving the youngsters I think it can be beneficial…because you can actually teach the topic in a particular way that you can build on their misconceptions and move them forward a lot quicker. Whereas if you actually had a full mixed ability it would be very difficult for a teacher to push the top end while still offering the support. Because you would be dealing with the ones who were struggling (teacher interview, July 2018).

Florian's (2012) work on inclusive practice finds that classroom teachers feel underprepared for inclusive education. However, some teachers are able to be highly inclusive while improving academic standards for all learners through focussing on extending learning opportunities to everybody as well as by focussing on learning as a shared activity. Florian's (2012) subsequent professional development of teacher educators makes the point that difference is part of the human condition, and draws on Hart *et al.*,'s (2004) notion of transformability, and the principled belief that students have a capacity to learn that can change.

This is not to deny, however, that meeting the needs of all learners is a challenge for educators. Students' comments are revealing here in terms of the complexities of this: some students comment that for them, work is too easy and they would like it to be more challenging, while others comment on the demands made of them in the classroom, suggesting that work is too difficult and that teachers expect them to work too quickly, thereby exemplifying how difficult it is for teachers to pitch their lessons correctly for all students (student questionnaire, June 2018).

Similar to my own values, Florian (2012) describes inclusive practice as extending what is available to all learners as an alternative to differentiating for some, particularly when differentiation is based on judgements about fixed ability. This type of inclusive practice is in contrast to the view of some educators who have long-standing notions about learners that are perpetuated by "bell-curve" explanations. In 'The Bell Curve', Murray and Hernnstein (1995) present the case for intelligence as the most important property of people, their educational attainments and their success in life. In contrast, Bourdieu (1993, p.177) rejects the biological or social foundations of 'intelligence', stating that "IQ racism is a racism of

the dominant class, and that the reproduction of the dominant class depends on the transmission of cultural capital".

Although the application of bell-curve thinking to the complexities of the education system is problematic, it is also prevalent. Fendler and Mufazzar (2008) suggest that the assumption of the bell-curve distribution allows for concepts such as an acceptable rate of failure, and the authors claim that the naturalisation of the bell curve is unjust, as it perpetuates the inevitability of failure. Teaching based on bell-curve assumptions may cause teachers to miss the learning needs of every student, it demotivates by guaranteeing expectation of failure, and it may lead to cheating due to administrative pressures to raise test scores (Wallace and Graves,1995).

In relation to my own study, teacher Hayley's comment on the benefits of attainment grouping is interesting when viewed through a Bourdieusian lens. She suggests that competition can be advantageous to learning:

> Those really, really clever children…they kind of feed off each other…they need to keep up, and not lose face in front of those very clever people (teacher interview, July 2018).

This comment demonstrates the fear and desperation of the students to remain 'in their place', endowing students with habitus, which shapes their view of how they see the world (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

Student Georgia embodies this in her reflections on being placed in the 'wrong' set for Science, stating her embarrassment at this action as it derives from the "kind of reputation you build up from…always being in the top sets, if you aren't then people are going to look and ask why" (student focus group, July 2018). Georgia and her peers believe she 'belongs' in higher-attaining groups, therefore reproducing the cultural arbitrary of the dominant (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Archer *et al.*, 2018).

Other students are less comfortable with the notion that they 'belong' in high-attaining groups, one Year 9 student in a Set 2 class commenting that she prefers to be in her class rather than a higher set as "when the teacher speaks, it's for everyone, not for the people who are best, or clever", and another student from a Set 3 class stating "I would prefer there to be sets because if someone gets put into a group, they'll be learning Set 1 work, and if you need Set 3 work, you won't get any of it" (student questionnaire, June 2018).

The notions of identity inherent in these students' comments are enlightening, demonstrating a perception of those in different sets as 'other' (Gewirtz 2001; Rohleder, 2014). James (2015) comments on the trend in UK educational policy to place schools at the heart of initiatives to realise greater social inclusion. Despite this wider context, segregation within schools is ubiquitous, with white middle-class students, problematically, predominantly clustered into top sets, having little interaction with students from other backgrounds. As Hollingworth and Mansaray (2012) suggest, despite one of the founding ideas of the comprehensive school system being that children should be encouraged to mix across the class divide, the reality of social mixing is far more restrained and complex.

Archer *et al.*, (2018) see attainment grouping as a replication of social hierarchies and power relations, inculcating the understanding that setting is a reflection solely of a student's talents and hard work. These notions of excellence, similar to the concept of "aristocratism of talent", (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p. 202), defend the right of dominant social groups to preside over elite educational spaces. Perhaps one way to counteract this is to ensure that experienced and successful teachers and resources are allocated fairly across a range of attainment groupings.

Certainly, notions that students internalise the social space which they are expected to inhabit, and what that means about themselves and their learning potential, are embedded throughout the participants' responses. Teachers of both mixed attainment and attainment groupings comment that students' self-belief in their potential can be affected by the attainment groupings they are placed in. As Abbie states:

> Especially, I mean that can be impacted by the groups that they've been in previously. So, if they've been in a different group and they're perhaps all lower-attaining students, they put that label upon themselves (teacher interview, July 2018).

This is also evident in teacher Clarissa's comment:

> Those who are in the middle or weaker, they come with a lot of baggage, like 'I know I can never be good enough' (teacher interview, July 2018).

Teacher Hayley can see the disadvantages of attainment grouping for previously lower attaining students:

> If you've got kids where the bar is lower, it's easier to slip under the bar, and it's easier for us as teachers not to stretch them because we have an unconscious, I don't know, idea of where they are. So maybe we're kind of, maybe our expectations are lower because we assume Set 3 kids aren't going to be talented, so therefore our expectations are lower and we're not pushing them on the same way (teacher interview, July 2018).

Some teachers try to work hard to overcome these structural disparities. As teacher Sophie says:

> This can be a crucial part of building secure relationships with students who will thrive if they know their teacher believes in their ability to succeed, especially if this belief has been suppressed by low-attainment groupings (teacher questionnaire, July 2018).

Similar to the findings of Archer *et al*., (2018), who suggest negative outcomes for those in the lowest sets are not limited to attainment, but also that placement in lower sets has deleterious effects on self-confidence, teachers in this study also comment on the negative consequences in the behaviours and attitudes of those students in lower-attaining groups: "others have lower self-esteem and self-belief which I think impacts on their focus and independent work", and "some clearly feel inhibited and have low expectations" (teacher questionnaire, June 2018).

These identities can manifest themselves in less obvious ways. As one teacher notes: "They often make statements which makes it sound like they are willing to settle. Almost too scared of not achieving to actually try", and another that "often lower attaining students have very little belief in their ability, particularly if they're not on track to get a 4 or a 'pass' at GCSE. At this stage, we can see students giving up" (teacher questionnaire, June 2018). This is also evident in teacher Clarissa's comment:

> Some of it's that they've never had the opportunity to explore what they can do because they've always had it wrong, so you don't try, because you give up because it's wrong (teacher interview, July 2018).

From the students' point of view, the agentic act of 'giving up' may be a preferable strategy in comparison to a debilitating fear of an impending failure that they have

no control over. As one lower-attaining student, Lewis, comments:

> Sometimes, teachers might set something a bit too high. I will try in many lessons, and when I do try they think “oh, I can just set him higher work now” and I’ll just come crashing down back to the same level I was before (student focus group, July 2018).

And as another lower-attaining student writes:

> I find preparation for exams extremely stressful to the point that I just turn up on the day with maybe a general idea of what it is about because I can't bare [sic] to even think about revision for a subject that I don't really understand anyway (student questionnaire, June 2018).

High-attaining students, however, can suffer similarly:

> I think it’s the stress and anxiety of wondering whether my work is actually good enough and of a high standard and wondering whether I will get the grades I want or fail miserably (student questionnaire, June 2018).

However, teachers and students believe that labelling is not necessarily the consequence of being placed in a specific class or set, as students have clearly adapted to their context by becoming skilled at ranking each other regardless. As Clarissa explains, “you can call them yellow spots or squares, but the kids know who the clever kids are” (teacher interview, July 2018). Clarissa’s comments are reminiscent of those made by Marks (2013, p.35), in her study of attainment grouping in mathematics in English primary schools. In Marks’s study, seven-year-old student Kelly reflects, “Mrs. Ellery puts us into different groups…and she moved me from here to here. This means you are good at maths; the blue table means you don’t have a clue*”.* Dixon *et al.*, (2002) suggest that the discourse of fixed ability and an ideological tendency to think about individuals in terms of capacity and limits becomes replicated by students. Marks (2013) finds that fixed-ability thinking pervades teaching practices and student-teacher interactions even in mixed-attainment settings, suggesting this is partially because fixed-ability thinking permeates society more broadly.

High-attaining student Maddie comments on the way students’ co-construct their peers’ ‘ability-identity’ (Marks, 2013):

> The other students see that you're the person who wants to get on with your work, and that you may need help sometimes (student focus group, July 2018).

Wallace and Graves' (1995) assumption is that the purpose of schooling is to promote democratic equality not to offer individuals competitive advantage. This is in contrast to those who hold a more capitalistic conviction that the purpose of schooling is to sort and rank individuals. This view is relevant in terms of comments made about by participants in the study about competition and ranking. Marks (2013) suggests that fixed-ability thinking influences students' reactions; they may behave differently when their ability-identity is at stake. As higher-attaining Year 9 student Maddie attests, this can create discordance when other students expect you to have the answers:

> Especially in a subject you're not as strong in, they assume you know everything about it; and even if you don't know the answer, they'll question you. Everybody will try to work with people in the top sets when we have the group tasks because then we can do the work and they can relax. They kind of have that expectation that we're always happy to do the work for them (student focus group, July 2018).

Year 9 student Georgia's response is similar as she states:

> It's the…reputation you build up from always…being in the top sets. And if you aren't, then people are going to look and ask why (student focus group, July 2018).

These students' comments could be interpreted as examples of Bourdieu's (2000) divided habitus. When students are removed from the context in which they feel they belong, the contradictions between these conflicting forms of identity are particularly apparent. This is also interesting in the light of the findings of Francis *et al.*, (2016) who question the practice of attainment grouping given the evidence that attests to its negative outcomes. In contrast, my own study would suggest that mixed attainment teaching may also be problematic as it may not remove fixed-ability thinking as that view of human capacity dominates much of our lives. Teachers comment that:

> I think some of the problems caused with setting are not completely gone when you teach mixed attainment classes. Because students

> are acutely aware of their rank, so having sat in the same room with someone they perceive to be significantly better than them, it doesn't necessarily get rid of that (teacher questionnaire, June 2018).

and:

> Students are often very perceptive at 'ranking' themselves in comparison to their peers. Being in a low set or being in a mixed attainment class sat next to someone who is making significantly more progress can be demoralising for a student, making them lower their academic expectations (teacher questionnaire, June 2018).

However, students' behaviours sometimes belie the identities that have been constructed by or for them. Teacher Clarissa comments that:

> I saw it this morning. Um, I came off the scheme of work a little. One of the weakest students was flying. And that quite surprised me and actually reinforced the fact that we should be prepared for the unexpected within the classroom and don't assume. They all have strengths and weaknesses (teacher interview, July 2018).

Clarissa's colleague Abbie makes a similar observation:

> This can be a crucial part of building secure relationships with students… who will thrive if they know their teachers believe in their ability to succeed, especially if this belief has been suppressed by low attainment groupings (teacher interview, July 2018).

A further complication to the construction of student ability-identities may be contextual as in this study, students are taught in a combination of attainment grouping and mixed-attainment grouping. Furthermore, these comments are made by teachers who teach predominantly in attainment groupings and, therefore, may be biased in favour of them.

Slavin (1996) refers to ability labelling as 'the sorting paradigm', suggesting that the correlation between social class and educational performance indicates a chasm between ideals and reality. The author insists that schools must not give up until the child is successful and promotes a cooperative learning approach, including collaboration with families. Hart *et al.*, (2004) prefer a less prescriptive approach to

Slavin's (1996) model and encourage teachers, students and their parents to take the necessary initiatives relevant to their contexts.

In contrast to a culture of competition, Swann *et al.*, (2012) argue that despite the current conceptualization of education through targets, levels, objectives and outcomes, potential is unpredictable and not linear, measurable or quantifiable. Their ethos espouses building shared relationships about learning, including how to be an effective learner and sharing the strategies that effective learners use. Interestingly, the authors suggest that setting aside ability-based practices are not sufficient on their own to change ingrained self-perceptions and behaviours, and in their model of good learning, students invite parents and other carers and family members into their school to teach them about learning, thereby redressing power imbalances. However, this may be problematic if parents hold other views, as a dominant model of schooling is nevertheless being imposed, potentially leading to binary understandings of families (Jupp, 2017).

As fixed ability thinking encourages teachers to see differential performance as inevitable, this diverts attention from the part classroom processes can have in limiting learning (Bourdieu, 1976). Instead, Hart *et al.*, (2004) believe that teachers can recognize, and take account of, the cultural achievements of students from a culture different to that from school. Symbolic power is achieved through people believing or accepting its legitimacy, and the education system can reinforce this (Bourdieu, 1990). Recognition that this power imbalance exists is pivotal and, therefore, the power imbalance that exists between school and students should not be taken for granted.

5.4 Attainment grouping and symbolic violence

For Bourdieu, our culture is constituted by different positions within social hierarchies that can be understood in terms of relative dominance. When the arbitrary nature of these hierarchies is disguised by presenting divisions as necessary, a form of symbolic violence is enacted (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). This enables certain groups occupying privileged positions to maintain dominance over others. A principal form of symbolic violence is pedagogic action; as power relations in society are arbitrary; they require some sort of action to be learned and absorbed (Webb, Schimto and Danaher, 2002).

Symbolic violence occurs when an ideology legitimises inequality between dominant and less powerful groups (Archer *et al*., 2018). Those who are excluded or without a voice are denied part of what it means to be fully human, which could be interpreted as psychologically abusive. For Bourdieu, most domination in society today is symbolic, and involves some sense of complicity on the part of those who are subjugated (James, 2015).

Pedagogic action proceeds by promoting certain doxa and consecrating certain positions. Doxa are regimes of truth articulated by bodies of knowledge that perform a reproductive function by communicating the values and meanings of the existing social order (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). The concept of mixed-attainment teaching, therefore, becomes unthinkable as it challenges established social relations.

Archer *et al.*, (2018) suggest that this can help explain why majority-group members defend the need for attainment grouping. Attainment grouping imposes an ideology that legitimises inequality between social groups. In Georgia's words, this is:

> Because of, the kind of reputation you build up from always, you know, being in top sets, if you aren't then people are going to look and ask why (student focus group, July 2018).

Other students express similar notions: they comment that "I like working in sets because everyone's at the same level"; "when the teacher speaks, it's for everyone, not for the people who are the best, or clever" and "I would prefer there to be sets because if someone gets put into a group, they'll be learning set 1 work and if you need set 3 work, you won't get any of it" (student questionnaire, June 2018). Although these students are not from high-attaining sets, they may be oblivious to the way social reproduction operates. However, this type of domination involves at least some sense of below-conscious complicity on the part of those who are subjugated. Processes of misrecognition wherein attainment grouping allocation is deemed natural makes this possible (James, 2015).

Nash (2002) proposes that the reason some students make more progress than others is simply because they want to be educated more than others, and that they possess an effective habitus to generate practice in accordance with that desire. As high-attaining Year 9 student Maddie summarises:

> In this class, you're told to get high marks and to stay on task, and you've got higher expectations from your teacher and the rest of your class to do well, so if you're in a lower set and there are some students who aren't on task and they don't feel they gonna get that grade, they're going to bring everyone else down (student focus group, July 2018).

A possible interpretation of this comment is given by Reay (2012), who suggests that schooling may be a context in which the middle classes may expect to feel at home but a fully comprehensive context may be unfamiliar to them. Similarities and differences are projected and valorised, idealised and demonised, although not necessarily consciously.

Archer *et al.*, (2018) comment that reasons given for teachers to be apprehensive about mixed attainment teaching share an assumption that the experiences and chances of the most privileged should not be compromised by poor behaviour and attainment of those in lower sets. This can be seen in some teachers' comments in this study: "I think you have to have some ability grouping, and I think the most able benefit"; "I've seen the advantage of having those really, really clever children together" and "some students enjoy working with those of a similar ability, particularly high achievers. It really works with the more able"; "it's very difficult to push the ones at the top end. That's the problem with mixed ability, you can't stretch as easily"; "the positive effects favour higher attainers as lessons can consist of more challenging material" and "if you had full mixed ability it would be very difficult for a teacher to push the top end while still offering support" (teacher questionnaire, June 2018).

Socially advantaged interests and voices tend to predominate debates around attainment grouping (Archer *et al*., 2018), exemplified by this teacher's comment:

> Some students enjoy working with those of a similar ability, particularly high achievers. It allows them to spark ideas off each other. It's also more straightforward in terms of delivering the lesson as all students can cope with the more difficult content. It really works with the more able (teacher questionnaire, June 2018).

5.5 Authenticity and its relation to habitus

Psychological studies show that personality traits can play an important role in predicting an individual's academic achievement (De Raad and Shouwenburg, 1996; Furnham *et al*., 2002; Borghans *et al*., 2008). There does seem to be some convergence between the concepts of personality and those of habitus and embodied cultural capital. Hart (2004), for example, comments on the monosyllabic nature of the responses of working-class girls to teachers' classroom questions and suggests as a response that teachers are less likely to initiate conversations with them. Tizard and Hughes (1984) find that this type of unwarranted differential treatment can eventually create disparities in achievement.

In my own study, teacher Clarissa uses the adjective "grey" as a noun to comment on character and personality, referring to "the greys in the middle" to describe the invisibility and anonymity of some students in the classroom. The definition of the adjective, "without interest or character; dull and nondescript", is an apt one when taking into account Clarissa's concern that these are the students who may get "lost". Brown (1987) refers to 'ordinary kids', the invisible majority of working-class students who are defined in terms of what they are not rather than what they are. The majority of these students adopt an alienated instrumental orientation; the school is involved in a sorting and selection process that generates division between students in an attempt to legitimate the processes of selection and allocation (Brown, 1987).

Some authors (for example Oakley *et al.,* 2002; Fisher, 2014) comment on the invisibility and anonymity of some students in the classroom and remind us that compliance does not necessarily imply active engagement. Oakley *et al*., (2002) define some students as quietly disaffected; they gain limited teacher attention, whereas more actively disruptive students are allowed to dominate lessons. Jones (2005) explores gender discourses in the classroom and argues that female identity in particular can be constructed as passive. This can lead to an absence of critical reflection on the impact that passivity or compliance can have on educational development. Student Georgia comments on this type of identity construction, and how it can be misinterpreted: "when there are more vocal people in the class, I'm not sure the teacher understands I really want to do well in that subject" (student focus group, July 2018).

Bowers-Brown (2016) points to the emphasis in policy on underachieving boys, leading to a binary positioning of girls as successful. Due to their apparent educational success, girls are instrumentalised as ideal neoliberal subjects. The generalisation that girls fulfil their role through hard work has implications for both expectation and lack of understanding of intersectional inequalities. Teacher Joshua is in agreement about the positioning of girls' achievement:

> Able female mathematicians just have so many other options because they're able across the board, whereas boys who are good are often good at this subject. So, we don't get as much take up at A level from girls as boys, so I think it can be a gender thing. Girls can be a bit harder on themselves, they tend to underestimate their own capabilities, whereas boys tend to overestimate (teacher interview, July 2018).

Teacher Abbie notes the consequences of returning classes to mixed gender groupings, following a brief experiment with single gender groupings: "It's meant that some groups have become more rowdy, and some groups have become more submissive, and it hasn't actually helped their learning at all" (teacher interview, July 2018).

Students construe that one of the expectations of the school community is compliance, which is connected to academic success. Students comment that they are expected to be "quiet" with "good behaviour". Their comments towards these expected behaviours tend to be positive and are conflated with statements about character from students who believe that they are expected to be "kind" and "helpful" and to "always try their best" (student questionnaire, June 2018). This may be easier to achieve for students who have similar backgrounds to those of their teachers, as they will have a clearer understanding of the types of behaviour that they are expected to display.

These student dispositions may offer advantage in terms of academic performance, but also in terms of positive teacher perceptions, as particular dispositions enacted in a given field translate into advantages within that field (Edgerton and Roberts, 2014). Nash (2002) suggests that high-attaining students exhibit a concept of self-discipline, emphasizing the values of attentiveness, diligence and self-control to academic performance. As teacher Joshua states:

> Some students are more motivated, some have a higher degree of self-efficacy and believe that their efforts will pay off, others have lower self-esteem and self-belief which I think impacts their focus and independent work (teacher interview, July 2018).

These values may not be shared by students from all social backgrounds, some of whom may reject education as superfluous to their perceived needs.

One suggestion to promote inclusivity is given by Cain (2012), who states the importance of celebrating introverted students for who they are, and recommends planning classroom activities to include independent projects as well as collaborative work with the aim of being more inclusive. The author comments that collaborative work can be beneficial for introverted students, although it does support learning when students are clear about their individual roles within a group. In this way, they can benefit from having the opportunity to translate their thoughts into language to a small number of their peers.

These findings are also interesting in the context of the government's focus on 'character education', described in the Department for Education's Education Strategy Overview (DfE, 2016) as the importance of preparing students for adult life, whilst building character and resilience. This focus is exemplified further through the 'activity passport' launched by the government (DfE, 2018a) with a view to inspiring children and boosting resilience through specific experiences and skills. Participation in these activities is to be recorded in the 'activity passport'. In addition to the requirement for schools to enhance the cultural capital of working-class students in the most recent Ofsted inspection framework (2019), this could also be seen as a further example of symbolic violence, as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

Furthermore, new benchmarks for character education are being developed against which schools must assess themselves (DfE, 2019b). It could be argued that the type of activities recommended, and developed in conjunction with the Boy Scouts, the Girl Guides and the National Trust (such as climbing trees, looking at the stars on a clear night, or flying a kite) are more accessible and familiar to children with a middle-class, and possibly less urban, background. One of the aims of these initiatives is to instil state school children with 'public-school confidence' (Hazell, 2019), reinforcing the dominance of middle-class cultural capital and habitus as the preferred model of character development.

In contrast, Hart *et al.*, (2004) point to the importance of the relational aspect of learning. Their model emphasises that caring for and working together to help students become safe and confident involves recognising students' contributions to enhance learning capacity. The authors do recognise the problematic nature of developing this type of learning culture and suggest that co-agency may need to be extended to the wider community for the culture to be effective.

5.6 The concept of field

According to Bourdieu, it is through habitus that agency is linked with capital and field, or structure (Bourdieu, 1990). The concept of field ensures that habitus is dynamic and not deterministic, and it is the link between field, habitus and cultural capital that generates the logic of practice (Reay, 2004). This can be explained by Bourdieu's use of the formula "(Habitus x Capital) + Field = Practice" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 101). When habitus encounters an unfamiliar field, change can be generated. Fields, the setting in which the action takes place, are spaces in which dominant and subordinate groups struggle for control. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) describe the school system as a field: teachers possess cultural capital, and reward students who possess it. As Coldron *et al*., (2010) explain, more affluent parents have motivation to gain educational advantage because of the fear of downward social mobility and are therefore:

> Fearful, alert and strategic (and) within the social field of education the middle class have enough capitals in the right currency, to ensure a high probability of success for their children. Their tactical deployment of these capitals more often than not enables them to gain access to and monopolize advantageous educational sites and trajectories. (Ball, 2003, p.168)

Jackson *et al*., (2005) argue that the effect of class on mobility is explained by that fact that those who try to be upwardly mobile face greater barriers than those who are trying not to move downwards. As Waller (2011) explains, there is a 'glass floor', an invisible barrier, to stop people falling down the social hierarchy in the same way people are prevented from moving upwards. Edgerton and Roberts (2014) also remind us that fields are relational in nature and are characterised by their own regulative principles. Individuals' positions within a field derive from the interrelation of their habitus and the capital they mobilise on that field. People's actions are the

consequence of their habitus and cultural capital interacting within their context. Therefore, there is a close dynamic between habitus and field. In the words of Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p.127), “when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a fish in water: it does not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world about itself for granted”.

It is evident within my own study that some students are more clearly aware of the nature of field and the expectations placed on them by teachers than others. Rosa groups her students in the hope that those who do understand the ‘social rules’ will have an impact on those who do not, “we bring poor attitude and behaviour into a high ability set hoping that the ‘nicer’ behaviours will rub off” (teacher interview, July 2018). Similarly, Amelia reports the concern of a student, who is not attaining highly but wants to have his ‘best chance’: the student felt that “people who might not be great with ability but want to work should be together, and if anyone messes about, can’t we just forget about them?” (teacher interview, July 2018). As referenced in my discussion on attainment grouping, student Maddie also explains how expectation and field are connected:

> If you’re in a lower set and there are some students who aren’t on task and they don’t feel they gonna get that grade, they’re going to bring everyone else down, and the teachers, they ignore it (student focus group, July 2018).

Teacher Hayley is in agreement:

> I think for me though, behaviour and ability – this is probably wrong – they are so entwined, aren’t they? (teacher interview, July 2018).

The primary goal of actors within a particular social field is often to make best use of their skills and resources to achieve advantage over others, and bring about their own success (Bourdieu, 1990). Each field has its own internal logic. Therefore, actors’ behaviours may be difficult to understand from an outsider’s perspective, and an individual’s habitus shapes what is credible within the social field (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012).

This is perhaps why some students reject being defined as hard-working. As teacher Joshua states:

> I met with a parent just last night and the student is just going through the motions, relying on their natural aptitude but not really pushing themselves (teacher interview, July 2018).

This is also evident in student Hannah's comment "I think some people are genuinely stupid and others are smart. Or they act stupid… they try to be like their friends, and they try to be who they're not" (student focus group, July 2018). The bespoke set of rules within the field is that it is preferable to be seen not to try, even at the expense of academic success.

5.7 Teacher and student notions of what helps high-expectation teaching and learning practices: social cohesion

According to Reay *et al.*, (2008), traditional notions of 'the bourgeois self' have prioritised individuality, self-interest and self-sufficiency over civic commitments and a sense of communal responsibility. This is unsurprising as values of the market, choice and individualism are seen as paramount over the discourse of welfare (Ball, 2003). Education policies exacerbate and legitimise self-interest through the promotion of parental choice and the publication of school league tables, encouraging competition between families (Oria *et al.*, 2007).

In terms of Bourdieu's (1997) three forms of capital: economic, social and cultural, it could be interpreted that socio-economic success is associated with greater social capital. When a social network becomes broader and more influential, it becomes more conducive to opportunity. The position an individual occupies within a social space will affect life chances and experiences, as well as aspirations and expectations (Bourdieu, 1984). Social cohesion is therefore a challenge as inequality rises from an education system tailored to white, middle-class values (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). The enhanced understanding of the education system possessed by middle-class parents ensures that, between schools, schooling is segregated by class, creating a society in which social mobility remains limited (Goodman and Burton, 2012).

Within this wider context, it is heartening that some students and teachers eschew the values of individualism and the marketisation of education, in favour of a dedication to the social justice values of comprehensive education. Teacher Alice, who teaches in mixed attainment groupings, suggests that:

> Attainment groupings don't necessarily allow for particular talents or abilities. I feel it can be limiting rather than empowering at times (teacher questionnaire, June 2018).

Alice also understands that success can look differently for different learners, commenting that she wants her students to:

> Achieve the best grade they are capable of. Sometimes a hard-earned E can be more satisfying than the A grade because of the hard work and dedication that grade represents to that student (teacher questionnaire, June 2018).

Other teachers in the sample similarly express their commitment to a social justice agenda. As teacher Clarissa explains:

> They put quite a lot of limits on themselves, and I think it's our job to, to actually take those limits away. (teacher interview, July 2018)

Although Clarissa teaches predominately in attainment groupings, she also believes the following:

> You see, I do start with letting them sit where they like and you soon learn who's not a good mix. And I like sitting the more able with the less able too, because I think that's really important, to mix them up a little if you can, because it's not necessarily the more able who will come up with a good idea and a good suggestion (teacher interview, July 2018).

Further examples of the importance of the belief in human educability are evident in Abbie's words:

> I think it's repetition of tasks, I think it's regular marking and feedback, I think that it's that dialogue with them as learners that shows I have confidence in them, and that I think they can do this (teacher interview, July 2018).

and these beliefs are echoed by Rosa:

> I want to encourage them, and then they're surprised, the smile on their face when they're succeeding! Everybody can do it, it's all

> achievable. I wouldn't make it so they couldn't do it (teacher interview, July 2018).

Hart *et al.*, (2004) feel that attainment-based groupings curtail opportunities and place limits on what individuals can achieve. They also suggest that learning capacity has a collective dimension, constituted by how a group of young people work together. Student Maddie comments on the power of peer support: "the other students see that you're the person who wants to get on with your work, and that you may need help sometimes" (student focus group, July 2018). Other students comment on the value of being with "people they trust" and that they "would like to be with Set 3 people to help them" (student questionnaire, June 2018).

Teacher Amelia actively aims to develop, then harness the power of social cohesion in her classroom:

> It's trying to make them a group. If they're all in splendid isolation, it's hard. If there's no interaction. The more interaction, if it's positive, where that dynamic is flying…(teacher interview, July 2018).

Similarly, other teachers feel that social cohesion within a group leads to more effective learning opportunities:

As Hayley states:

I rely on us all getting along, and if someone oversteps the mark they kind of feel a bit ashamed, because normally we're all having a nice time (teacher interview, July 2018).

Rosa feels that teachers can model kindness to their students, and to her, the relationship between teacher and student means:

> It's showing an interest in them, isn't it? Having that relationship is one really important thing. It's about being decent to the children (teacher interview, July 2018).

The social and cultural fluency inherent in comments made by both students and teachers can be seen as highly valued attributes in contrast to the current educational context which valorises competition and individualism (Reay *et al*., 2008).

5.8 Reflections

To explore the social concerns raised throughout this study through the theoretical framework of Bourdieu has been important in trying to make sense of the wider issues of inequality, particularly in the sense that habitus is helped by, and helps shape, pedagogical action. Through the lens of Bourdieu's theories, we can see why education tends to reproduce social division. As in any field, education is comprised of objective relations and structures, and these are complex and dynamic. Home and family also play a significant role in social reproduction and provides consequences for the success of the student (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002).

Archer *et al.*, (2018) see attainment grouping in particular as key to the reproduction of social hierarchies and power relations and as a means of defending the 'right' of dominant social groups to populate elite educational spaces. Although I would agree that it is important to question the value and legitimacy of setting practices, mixed attainment teaching in itself may not be a sufficient structural response to allow for individual agency, innovation and change (Edgerton and Roberts, 2014).

In terms of my own positionality, it is difficult to accept that I am part of a system that generates these types of inequalities. There is an inherent tension between this Bourdieusian analysis and my original aim in exploring the notion of teacher expectation, with a view to building a more inclusive learning environment. As James (2015, p. 108) writes "for all its practical derivation and relevance, the compass of a Bourdieusian analysis is not likely to lend itself to 'reading off' recipes for action". As Bourdieu's approach is largely a sociology of domination, it tends towards pessimism. It is important for me to acknowledge and recognise this tension, both within this study and in my own positionality.

In response to research question 3, which asks about the perceived barriers to creating a culture of high expectation, as Blandford (2018) asserts, there tends to be a confusion that social mobility is about class migration rather than, more generally, life improvement and an improvement of life chances. All communities have rich heritage, which could be celebrated alongside providing all students with access to a wide variety of social and cultural activities: the valuing of this diversity would allow students to move across different spheres. A shared moral purpose and shared ambition conducted with integrity would be closer to authentic social justice in action.

In the following, and final chapter, I will provide the conclusion of the research. I will discuss the extent to which I have answered the research questions, critically reflect on the study, and make further recommendations, including implications for professional practice. I will also describe how the research process has impacted on me personally, both as a researcher and as a classroom practitioner.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Although the field of teacher expectation is well researched, it is also problematic and heavily contested (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968; Claiborn, 1969; Greiger, 1970; Jose and Cody, 1971; Spitz, 1999; Jussim and Harber 2005; Hattie, 2009 and Rubie-Davies *et al.*, 2015). In addition to definitions of what makes a 'high expectation' teacher through theoretical models, I have also explored the literature around what constitutes a 'high expectation' teacher from particular locations, including government policy, professional regulation, and performance management and notions of identity. These positions sometimes overlap, but at times, also conflict with one another.

The purpose of this concluding chapter is to present the ways in which this study adds to the existing knowledge of this complex phenomenon by drawing together and commenting on themes created from the data. In addition, I will discuss the extent to which I have answered the research questions, critically reflect on the study, and make recommendations for future policy, practice and research. I will also describe how the research process has impacted on me personally and professionally.

I have aimed to use the literature to support and counter my argument, exploring ways teachers aim to build an inclusive learning environment and methods used to develop strategies that do not rely on pre-determined ability labelling. The research extends knowledge in that it furthers understanding of teacher and student views of teacher expectation through considering the complexities and uniqueness of this particular case. I have used the same approach as other authors (Rubie-Davies, 2015), but as findings have not previously been applied at the secondary-school level, nor in the UK, these have been used as a stepping stone to somewhere new (Harris, 2017). My approach has also included problematising the literature, by exploring the barriers to creating a culture of high expectation, in addition to showing that concepts related to teacher expectation are not universally agreed.

6.1 Research question 1: What are teachers' and students' perceptions of teacher expectations in the workplace

The data from the participants in this study showed that some teachers hold the view that all students are capable of achieving their best, with the right support in place. Teachers also show awareness that academic success may look different for different learners. Many teachers believe that teachers' expectations should not alter according to students' prior attainment and believe that their role is to support students to 'catch up'. Teachers also believe that one of the purposes of school is to enable students to achieve goals that are of their choosing, whether these goals are academic or vocational. Many teachers in the study drew on notions of transformability, and on the principle that teachers can enhance students' capacity for learning instead of relying on predetermined notions about ability (Hart, 2004).

Students with a range of prior attainment commented that their teachers expected them to try their hardest, believing that there is a causality between student effort and attainment. Many students believe that if they have tried their hardest, their attainment is of little importance to teachers as long as they have 'done their best'. Students also believe that there are further requirements to being seen as successful at school beyond their attainment, naming character traits such as kindness, helpfulness and good behaviour as particularly desirable.

There are, however, tensions within this dataset in response to this research question. Teachers and students are clear that there are barriers to teaching and learning that hinder the creation of a culture of high expectations. These will be explored further in summarising the responses to research question 3.

6.2 Research question 2: What strategies do teachers and students believe teachers use to create a culture of high expectations?

i) The use of questioning in the classroom

Several teacher participants expressed their commitment to the practices of dialogic teaching, classroom conversation and use of teacher questioning as important classroom tools for furthering student confidence and understanding, in addition to the development of positive teacher–student relationships. Questioning is

sometimes used to build student confidence, and as a way of promoting diversity and inclusivity in the classroom, signalling that all voices are valued. Here, my research findings are similar to the findings of Rubie-Davies (2007), Tofade, Elsner and Haines (2013) and Paramore (2017), who comment on the benefits of effective questioning and use of classroom dialogue to maximise student learning. The findings of Chrisoph and Nystrand (2001), Alexander (2017) and Davies, Kiemer and Meissei (2017) are also supported, as they espouse the use of dialogic teaching to extend student thinking, and to facilitate students to take part in discussions about their own learning.

Students refer to this classroom practice less frequently, believing that teachers expect them to produce meaningful answers and sometimes to think of their own questions, but there is contradictory evidence that some students may feel 'targeted' by questioning, implying that they feel they are receiving unwarranted attention when a teacher is directing questions to them.

ii) The role of feedback

My research supports the finding that the role of feedback is a practice that high expectation teachers use to try to create a culture of high expectation (Rubie-Davies, 2015). Teachers state that they use feedback to set students' goals, clarify misconceptions, and to fill gaps in student knowledge (Hattie, 2012; 2015). Feedback is also used to reinforce positive teacher–student relationships, to acknowledge student effort, and to build student confidence (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). Verbal feedback is considered valuable, both in terms of student learning preference and as a means of reducing teacher workload, whilst simultaneously impacting positively on student learning.

Responses suggesting feedback is a powerful tool to further student learning may be more frequent as the importance of the role of feedback was specified in the teacher questionnaire. However, the question was worded in a way that allowed for a variety of responses. Students refer to this classroom practice less frequently, although they were asked how teachers explain how students can improve their work. However, several students also acknowledged the importance of teacher feedback, perceiving it as an indication of teachers' efforts to try to improve students' work.

iii) Strategies teachers use to improve student motivation

Several teachers in the dataset stated that they use praise and positive language with the aim of encouraging and motivating learners in addition to building their confidence. Some teachers commented that motivation and feedback are bi-directional, and they explain how they ensure that students experience success to build student confidence. Thus, many teachers scaffold learning to support struggling learners. Here, my research supports the findings of Wray *et al.*, (2000), Berliner (2004), Topping and Ferguson (2005), Rosenshine (2012) and Rubie-Davies (2015), who suggest that providing a framework and scaffolding for learning can improve student learning of new concepts.

Students did not refer to student motivation in relation to teaching strategies; instead, they referred to motivation in relation to student behaviour. These comments were sometimes positive, as summarised in the responses to research question 1: students perceive motivation and a positive work ethic as key to academic success. However, both teachers and students perceive a lack of motivation to be a barrier to student learning. This finding will be explored further when summarising responses to research question 3.

iv) The importance of classroom relationships

Many respondents comment on the importance of classroom relationships. Several teachers acknowledge the importance of positive and healthy peer relationships in the classroom; students also comment on the importance of their peers to their ability to make progress in their academic work. Although some students prefer to work with members of their friendship groups, most students preferred to work with those students who value their own academic work and who wanted to progress.

Many teachers saw positive relationships with their students as pivotal to success in the classroom, believing that openly caring about their students as individuals as well as academic learners was of importance to their academic progress. Several students expressed a desire to be ‘known’ by their teachers and valued teachers’ understanding and acknowledgment of their academic goals and limits. Students sometimes expressed discomfort when they felt teachers judged them prematurely, even before a relationship had chance to develop. Here, my research supports the

work of several authors who comment on the importance of a warm classroom climate, in which the quality of teacher–student relationships can foster academic success. Students may be more motivated if they believe that the teachers care about them (Wentzel, 1997; Muller, Katz and Dance, 1999; Ireson and Hallam, 2005; Roorda and Koomen, 2011; Noddings, 2012; Rubie-Davies *et al*., 2015).

6.3 Research question 3: What are the perceived barriers to creating a culture of high expectation?

Teachers and students perceive there to be barriers to creating a culture of high expectation. Some teachers believe that students' academic progress in school is hindered as some parents and carers cope with other burdens at work and at home. Some teachers believe that some students have fewer clear boundaries at home, and those students find the enforcement of boundaries at school a greater challenge. Some teachers believe that students are disadvantaged by access to books, computers or by a lack of educational aspiration in their families. These findings are in agreement with writers such as Blandford (2018), who comments that disadvantaged students are, on average, two years of learning behind non-disadvantaged students by the end of secondary school.

Some teachers believe that barriers to creating a culture of high expectation are students' poor behaviour, motivation, resilience and self-regulation. These findings are similar to the research literature, wherein student motivation can be a determiner of student achievement (Dweck, 1986; Hruska, 2011). Some students also express their frustration with the poor behaviour of their peers, and sometimes attribute this to an inappropriate level of pace and challenge in the classroom. Although this is sometimes framed in terms of the work being 'too easy', students sometimes feel work is too challenging, which leads to the lesson material being inaccessible to them. Some students are reflective about their own behaviour, and show awareness that a barrier to their learning is "chatting to other people", that they "talk too much" or that they "find it hard to be sensible".

Students' levels of academic self-concept and belief about their academic abilities is considered by several teachers and students as a further barrier to their learning. Some teachers believe that students have a fear of failure or they label themselves as already failing. Some teachers suggest that low self-confidence can be exacerbated when students compare themselves to their peers. Although authors

such as Archer *et al.*, (2018) suggest that this form of competitive individualism can be magnified by attainment grouping, both students and teachers in this study comment that students tend to rank each other regardless of the groupings they are placed in. This type of ranking may be compounded in this case study as students are taught in a combination of attainment groupings and mixed attainment groupings. Some students comment that the teaching group they are placed in is irrelevant, as long as the work that they are required to complete is pitched at an appropriate level for them.

Most teachers who currently teach in attainment groupings believe that mixed attainment groupings would create further barriers to progress, as they would feel unable to facilitate challenges for higher-attaining students. Importantly however, Francis *et al.*, (2017) find that while small achievement gains may be made by placing higher-attaining students in sets, the impact on previously lower attaining students is negative. Teachers who currently teach in mixed attainment groupings comment on the benefits of working with students of mixed prior attainment, in that their particular talents and abilities can be celebrated and aspiration can be modelled to a wider range of students.

Grouping is related to behaviour by both teachers and students. Teachers are sometimes concerned with the impact of large class sizes, commenting that this can narrow the range of teaching and learning strategies that they would prefer to use, and that large class sizes allow more opportunities for off-task behaviour. Most students, of varying levels of prior attainment, seem more concerned with avoiding disruptive behaviour than with the academic grouping they are placed in, although both in this study, and in the literature, there is a correlation between low-attainment groupings and disruptive student behaviour.

Archer *et al*., (2018) assert that the legitimacy of setting is maintained through misrecognition. Students come to understand themselves and others as deserving their set allocation on the basis that setting is reflective of their ‘natural’ abilities, and that segregation is needed in order to protect the experiences and attainment of those with higher ‘ability’ from the ‘distracting’ presence of ‘others’. However, disruptive peers may be expressing their lack of agency in their set placement through their rebellious behaviour (Mazenod *et al.*, 2018), potentially perpetuating the cycle that previously low-attaining students are placed in more disruptive groups.

6.4 What helps and what hinders high-expectation teaching and learning practices through a Bourdieusian lens

In response to research question 3, and with the aim of problematising the research literature, I chose to discuss what helps and also what hinders high-expectation teaching and learning practices through a Bourdieusian lens. As I am driven by social justice and by my belief in human educability in contrast with the predictability of ability labelling, the social concerns raised throughout this study led me to explore the theories of Bourdieu with the aim of making sense of the wider issues of inequality inherent in this study (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984; 1990; 1993).

Through this lens, the barriers to enacting the practices of high expectation teachers can be understood as a means of retrenching dominant power relations. Through a re-reading of the data collected for the case study, it could be suggested that teacher and student comments concerning barriers to creating a culture of high expectations relate to Bourdieusian ideas about different types of capital. As more middle-class forms of cultural capital are valued over others, social inequality is further entrenched. Through a Bourdieusian perspective, academic capital is the product of the combined effects of cultural transmission by the family and the school (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984). As a consequence, if students' cultural capital is similar to that as defined by the school, they are in an advantageous position. This is further legitimised as students from similar backgrounds will have been exposed to similar environments (Bourdieu, 2002).

In terms of economic capital, some teachers comment that student progress in school is hindered as some parents and carers are coping with other burdens. Some teachers believe that students are disadvantaged by access to books and computers at home, or by a lack of educational aspiration in their families. There are certain indications wherein teachers recognise schooling presents fewer barriers for students who possess middle-class cultural capital: some teachers believe that certain students have fewer clear boundaries at home; therefore, they find the enforcement of boundaries at school a greater challenge to accept. They feel that some students have a clear understanding of the hidden language inherent in school institutions, particularly as teachers tend to come from fairly privileged backgrounds and may be disposed to favour students who share their values and attitudes (Webb, Schimto and Danaher, 2002).

Students' levels of academic self-concept and belief about their academic abilities is considered by several students and teachers as a barrier to their learning. Some teachers believe that students have a fear of failure, or they label themselves as already failing. However, language used by both students and teachers within this case study reflects the language of meritocracy and the ethos that students can achieve highly in terms of their academic success as long as they possess the necessary work ethic. Jensen (2010) argues that this concept denies the role of privilege in the success of individuals and does not engage with the effects of class, social hierarchy or wealth.

The Bourdieusian notion of habitus is also present in the study. Students express the idea that they 'belong' in certain sets, therefore reproducing the cultural arbitrary of the dominant (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Archer *et al.*, 2018). Teachers also comment on the way students rank and judge each other, and some teachers suggest there is a correlation between being placed in a lower-attaining set and students' self-belief in their potential. Some participants' comments refer to the discomfort created when students' ability-identity is at stake, particularly evident amongst students who attain more highly academically.

In my initial thematic analysis of the data, most teachers and students seemed to believe that mixed attainment teaching would not remove the social hierarchies inherent in the school structure, and that students would continue to rank and judge each other regardless. I found students' comments on attainment grouping reassuring, in that students seemed less concerned with the groupings they were placed in than being 'known' by the teachers, and being placed in the set in which they 'belong'. However, through a Bourdieusian lens, students may be oblivious to the way social reproduction operates: this type of domination involves at least some sense of below-conscious complicity on the part of those who are subjugated. Processes of misrecognition wherein attainment grouping allocation is deemed natural makes this possible (James, 2015).

In response to research question 2, some teachers are perceived as trying to create a culture of high expectation, despite these barriers. Some students and teachers eschew the values of individualism and the marketisation of education in favour of a dedication to the social justice values of comprehensive education. They commit to a social justice agenda, believing that success can look differently for different learners. Some teachers actively aim to develop and harness the power of social

cohesion in their classrooms, and some students' comments exemplify their role in creating an atmosphere of trust and collegiality.

6.5 Implications for practice

I will now offer the implications for practice which have arisen from the exploration of the research data. Sharing the behaviours, characteristics and beliefs associated with high teacher expectations (Rubie-Davies *et al.,* 2015) may be beneficial to classroom practitioners interested in exploring these within their own contexts. However, there is an additional, more complex understanding of this phenomenon (Richardson, 1994). Therefore, I would suggest that in terms of practice, there needs to be:

- A recognition that in education, socially advantaged interests and voices dominate in terms of social mobility agendas (Archer *et al*., 2018). Social cohesion is therefore a challenge as inequality rises from an education system tailored to white, middle-class values (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977), and until we value the diversity of heritage in all its forms, we cannot hope for greater equity for our students.
- A notion of the teacher's voice that addresses the right to speak and be represented (Butt *et al*., 1992). Teachers' voices in this sense have been encouraged and granted space in the public domain only through technical competency (Goodson, 2014). As the voices of teachers in this case study illustrate, teachers must be able to be emotionally committed to different aspects of their jobs, as their sense of moral responsibility is at the core of their professional identity (Nias, 1989).

Hence, in terms of professional identity, the culture of professional development in my own workplace aims to be one of critical self-reflective practice, in which teachers become aware of and make public their process of learning with others. Hopkins (2008) suggests that undertaking research is a way that teachers can take increased responsibility for their actions. Additionally, Stenhouse (1975, p.2-3) comments on the nuances inherent in the inevitable gap between this aspiration and reality, and the importance of teachers' professional expertise:

> "Our educational realities seldom conform to our educational intentions. We cannot put our policies into practice. We should not regard this as a failure peculiar to schools and teachers. We have only to look around us to confirm that it is part of the human lot. But… improvement is possible if we are secure enough to face and study the nature of our failures. The central problem of evidence-informed practice is the gap between our ideas and our aspirations and our attempts to operationalise them."

Consequently, following this study, time has been given for teachers in this workplace to collaboratively plan, teach, observe and analyse the teaching and learning practices of high-expectation teachers in 'research lessons'. Over a cycle of research lessons, teachers may innovate or refine a pedagogical approach that will improve students' learning, the findings of which will be shared with others as this knowledge may be of interest to other practitioners, along with the findings of this case study.

One possible way teachers could aim to support social cohesion is through the careful consideration of attainment grouping of students. There are well-documented challenges with all forms of grouping, but attainment grouping seems to provide no overall benefit in terms of student attainment, and furthermore serves to exacerbate existing social inequalities (Francis *et al*., 2017). Nevertheless, setting in an equitable way can present challenges for schools. I am also mindful of the importance of context and believe that the application of research evidence in the teacher's own context is for the practitioner to decide, using their knowledge, thinking and astute judgement (Kvernbekk, 2016).

The recommendation here would be that a form of 'high-integrity' setting could be implemented. Although some teachers in this study reflect a preference for attainment grouping, they will be given the opportunity to explore evidence related existing practices in attainment grouping with the aim of ensuring students from all social backgrounds and prior attainment levels are entitled to an equality of access to high-quality pedagogy and curriculum (Francis *et al.*, 2018). In practice, strategies such as: making setting as subject-specific as possible; grouping students by attainment rather than perceived effort; regularly testing and moving students between sets, and using a lottery system when assigning borderline students to sets may help mitigate the consequences of attainment grouping (Francis *et al.*, 2018). Schools, however, may be deterred from implementing more

equitable grouping practices by perceptions of middle-class parental and student preferences for attainment grouping (Crozier *et al*., 2011). A further complication raised in this study, and one that differs from my own opinion, is that most teachers who currently teach in attainment groupings believe that mixed attainment groupings would create further barriers to progress.

6.6 Critical reflections on the research study

Although the research questions did not ask for parental views of teacher expectation, this could have been a fruitful avenue for exploration. The impact of students' home background on their educational attainment has been evident throughout this study, particularly in comments made by teachers. Some teachers refer to lack of academic support at home as a potential cause of perceived lack of student aspiration, and a lack of understanding of school rules and structures.

However, in this study, this deficit discourse in terms of expectation is not explored through parental voice. The discourse in the relationships between teaching staff and parents and families is complex, and perhaps underpinned by 'othering', in that teachers may differentiate themselves from those who are poorly served by the system (Goodall, 2018). Most parents want their children to do well, however parents choose to define that success. Some middle-class parents, for example, may reject engaging in competition for educational success, and do not (at least, deliberately) intend on using their economic position to further their children's advantage (Crozier *et al.,* 2011). It is, therefore, important and would be enlightening to engage further with parents and families in terms of their own views of teacher expectation.

A further weakness of the study can be seen in terms of representation. Using the Pupil Premium measure as an indicator of disadvantage, students from this background are included, but are slightly under-represented. Male students are also under-represented in focus group discussions. Consequently, findings may not fully represent the views of students who are most at risk of experiencing low teacher expectation.

Furthermore, as my study focusses on student and teacher views of teacher expectation, participants may be saying what they think should be said rather than what they really believe or do. (Hammersley, 2013). My position as insider-

researcher may have exacerbated this, as my heightened familiarity with the research setting may have either given me greater opportunities for thick description, or merely a superficial appearance of it (Mercer, 2007). I chose to focus on the words of the participants and embrace the complexities and contradictions inherent within these despite this risk.

As with any case study, a further criticism of this research could be that it is context-specific. Stake (1995) warns that it is not uncommon for case study researchers to make assertions on a relatively small database, and certainly the size of the database in my own study could lead to criticism of it. In response to this type of criticism, Stake (1995) refers to 'naturalistic' interpretation. Here, the writer is referring to the learning processes through which we acquire concepts and information, and in generalising them as we learn more. I have aimed to be mindful of the importance of careful interpretation throughout this study, being tentative rather than overstating my findings. As Stake (1995) reminds us, interpretation invokes both privilege and responsibility.

Maxwell (2017) defines validity as trustworthiness or credibility, in contrast to more positivist assumptions of validity. To aim for trustworthiness, this research has followed the specific procedures of self-reflection, rich description and an audit trail of the research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Despite following these procedures, some philosophers believe that nothing yields entirely 'sound' data (Phillips, 1987). Instead, validity pertains to the conclusions reached by using a particular method in a particular context for a particular purpose, referring to how well these accounts and conclusions help us to understand the phenomena being studied (Maxwell, 2017). My research is an attempt to understand views of teacher expectation, without assuming that there is one, correct understanding of reality. Instead, the account attempts to represent participants' perceptions of the phenomena (Cresswell and Miller, 2000).

6.7 A professional learning journey

On reflection, although I have always valued student voice, it can be a challenge for schools to listen to and access it authentically amongst the everyday pressures of school life. Paying close attention to what students have to say is not only important, students have a right to be heard: every child must be free to express

their thoughts and opinions (UNCRC, 1992). Although I paid close attention to power asymmetries throughout this study, it is difficult to claim that this research was fully participatory: I question whether the research was conducted with, rather than on, the participants. This may be partially because of my position in the school hierarchy, or maybe because I alone decided on the research questions. Giving students the opportunity to be involved in a more participatory project, in which they were co-researchers rather than participants, may have addressed some of these concerns.

A further reflection for me is on the complex and problematic nature of the barriers to creating a culture of high expectation. I entered into this research project with a rather idealistic notion that exploring one definition of high-expectation beliefs and teaching practices (Rubie-Davies, 2015) could lead to the creation of a culture of high expectation. The reality is far messier. In addition to my exploration of the contradictory definitions of what makes a 'high expectation' teacher, Goodson (2014) comments that research discourse related to teachers tends to be prescriptive, rather than serious study of, or collaboration with, those prescribed to or portrayed. This resonates with my own professional experience. This partially explains the deficit that I can see in the first part of my research journey, and the need to use a second, Bourdieusian derived lens to analyse the data more fully.

The teacher as researcher approach presents a number of problems, as the work of teachers is politically and socially constructed. To narrow the focus to 'practice as defined' is to turn the teacher's practice into that of a technician, passing the initiative for defining the research agenda to politicians and bureaucrats (Goodson, 2014). Lawn (1990) argues that teachers' work has moved away from moral responsibility to a narrow technical competence, severing teachers from those processes which would involve them in deliberations about the future shape of their work. Few teachers are aware of the potential profundity of that change (Robertson, 1993), and until the completion of this research journey, I also lacked an adequate awareness of the impact of the battery of government regulations, edicts, tests, accountabilities and assessments, which have provided parameters for the actions of teachers (Goodson, 2014)

Teachers' power to make a difference partially depends on how young people choose to exercise their own power in relation to their own lives; they are active agents in their own right and can use their power to resist teachers' best efforts to engage them with the learning opportunities provided (Hart *et al.,* 2004). For some

students, this may be the only way they feel they can express their agency, yet transformability can only be achieved through joint enterprise.

Teachers and students expressed the view that preferred strategies were based on positive classroom relationships cultivated through the use of teacher praise and positive language, ensuring success in learners' experiences and meaningful teacher feedback, in addition to the use of classroom systems and routines. Nurturing teacher and student relationships is seen as important for both teachers and students; students particularly value their teachers understanding the work that they are capable of and helping them improve accordingly. Therefore, it could be suggested that classroom relationships are key to transformability and are at the heart of the teaching profession. Teachers who are less tolerant of a range of student behaviours are more likely to have low expectations for the learning of students whose behaviour is challenging and such students may experience reduced opportunities for learning as a result (Rubie-Davies, 2015). Noddings (2012) defines good teachers as those who use their professional and moral judgement in responding to the needs of their students. Personal relations formed in the classroom may enhance the likelihood that students will live in, and promote a public climate in which caring relations will continue to flourish. In short, a caring climate is "underneath all we do as teachers" (Noddings, 2012, p.777).

6.8 Future research

In terms of students' access to higher education, expectation and aspiration are connected: expectations temper aspirations with perceived achievability. A likely factor in the creation of expectation is the influence of teachers and parents (Harrison and Waller, 2018). Archer *et al*., (2014) find parental expectations have a socio-economic dimension, as those parents from higher socio-economic groups may be more likely to provide practical support and enrichment activities to enable their children to gain the necessary entrance to the universities of their choosing.

Since 1992, there has been a sharp increase in the number of people participating in higher education in the UK (McLellan *et al.*, 2016). Despite this increase, participation in higher education is segregated by class, geography and ethnicity. Working-class and state-school students are less likely to apply to Russell Group

universities and are much less likely to receive an offer at these universities than privately educated applicants with the same qualifications (Boliver, 2013).

The blame for the under-representation of disadvantaged students in elite universities is sometimes placed on schools and, sometimes, on the students themselves (Russell Group, 2013). Furthermore, Harrison and Waller (2017) contend that for elite universities, widening participation tends to be defined by the encouragement of applications from high-attaining students who would otherwise choose lower status institutions rather than by a genuine widening of participation.

During the writing of this thesis, the Russell Group of universities changed its approach to recommending students study 'facilitating subjects' at A-level, replacing the previous subjects with A-level subjects relevant to the specific degrees. This could be in response to concerns that the list of 'preferred' subjects, which does not recognise the arts or vocational qualifications, could be forcing schools to narrow their curriculum (Bloom, 2019), in addition to further attempts to widen participation. This decision could also be seen as contradictory to government policy that students study specific subjects for the 'English Baccalaureate'. With this in mind, it would be useful to explore student aspirations as an aspect of expectation in this context.

This case study is also related to student identity, in that the associations between identity and constructions of 'ability' are referenced by participants in this study. Identity seems to be underpinned by notions of ability or intelligence; rationality and self-reflection; good conduct; hard work and commitment; and childhood and adolescent development (Youdell, 2006). Fixed-ability thinking continues to manifest itself even in classroom situations not dominated by explicit grouping and labelling. Teachers and students in the study sometimes discuss student attainment as if individuals are preordained with a fixed ability, adjusting and limiting experiences and expectations accordingly (Marks, 2013). It would be interesting to explore further how students may be impacted by their 'ability-identity', and to what extent they feel they have agency in its construction.

6.9 Final reflections

Blandford (2018) challenges the assumption that academic achievement is paramount and suggests that there are many other measures of success, in which

students discover and are celebrated for a particular talent, or a passion for something new. The ability to make choices should be a fundamental right and should be accessible to all as a result of social justice (Blandford, 2018).

This presents a challenge in today's economic and political climate. At the time of writing, 4.1 million children in the UK are living in poverty, a rise of 500,000 in the last five years, and in-work poverty has been rising even faster than unemployment, driven almost entirely by increasing poverty among working parents (Barnard, 2018). In addition to the economic context our young people are living in, educational policy increases social inequities rather than reducing the poverty attainment gap (Greany and Higham, 2018). For example, additional funding has been allocated for new grammar school places (DfE, 2018b), despite evidence that dividing children into the most 'able' and the rest from an early age does not appear to lead to better results for either group, including for the most disadvantaged students (Gorard and Siddiqui, 2016).

The financial landscape for most schools paints a bleaker picture than that for grammar schools. By 2020, school spending per pupil in England is likely to fall by around 8%, taking school-specific inflation into account. A further significant challenge for the education sector is the recruitment of the required number of teachers of sufficient quality and motivation, at a time of continued public pay restraint and rising student numbers (Belfield and Sibieta, 2015). Similarly, spending on early education, Sure Start and the childcare element of Working Tax Credit fell by 21% from 2009–10 and 2012–13, with falls of 11% for early education, 29% for targeted support for childcare and 32% for Sure Start. Child Tax Credit and Child Benefit payments were frozen in financial terms (Lupton *et al.*, 2015). In addition to cuts to income support, community-based support services and to the funding of voluntary groups and services, this financial context may have an impact on children as they enter the school system.

Britain's high-status professions remain dominated by the privileged; those from traditionally working-class backgrounds earn on average £6,800 less than colleagues from professional and managerial backgrounds (Friedman and Savage, 2017). Although students in this study feel that they can 'get ahead' on merit, it could be suggested that British society is profoundly unfair. Education is crucial to change, but it cannot be considered in isolation if we are going to tackle the challenge of disadvantage. Education must be freed from its current constraints so

that educators have the opportunity to develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full (UNCRC, 1990).

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Appendix A: Ethical approval for study, granted by the Faculty Research Committee

Application title: Creating a culture of high expectation in an English secondary school: a blended case study and action research approach

I am writing to confirm that the Faculty Research Ethics Committee are satisfied that you have addressed all the conditions relating to our previous letter sent on 24th April 2018 and the study has been given ethical approval to proceed.

Please note that any information sheets and consent forms should have the UWE logo. Further guidance is available on the web: https://intranet.uwe.ac.uk/tasks-guides/Guide/writing-and-creating-documents-in-the-uwe-bristol-brand

The following standard conditions also apply to all research given ethical approval by a UWE Research Ethics Committee:

1. You must notify the relevant UWE Research Ethics Committee in advance if you wish to make significant amendments to the original application: these include any changes to the study protocol which have an ethical dimension. Please note that any changes approved by an external research ethics committee must also be communicated to the relevant UWE committee.
   http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/research/researchethics/applyingforapproval.aspx

2. You must notify the University Research Ethics Committee if you terminate your research before completion;

3. You must notify the University Research Ethics Committee if there are any serious events or developments in the research that have an ethical dimension.

Please note: The UREC is required to monitor and audit the ethical conduct of research involving human participants, data and tissue conducted by academic staff, students and researchers. Your project may be selected for audit from the research projects submitted to and approved by the UREC and its committees.

We wish you well with your research.

Chair Faculty of Arts, Creative Industries & Education Research Ethics Committee

Appendix B Student questionnaire

1. Name and current attainment grouping?
2. I enjoy schoolwork (Yes/No/Sometimes options with an option to explain response)
3. I find schoolwork too challenging (Yes/No/Sometimes options with an option to explain response)
4. My teachers care about how much I learn (Yes/No/Sometimes options with an option to explain response)
5. My teachers enjoy helping me learn (Yes/No/Sometimes options with an option to explain response)
6. Some students' work is better than others (Yes/No/Sometimes options with an option to explain response)
7. Only certain students can do well in school (Yes/No/Sometimes options with an option to explain response)
8. It makes students feel negatively about themselves when they don't do as well as others (Yes/No/Sometimes options with an option to explain response)
9. My teachers explain how to improve my work. (Yes/No/Sometimes options with an option to explain response)
10. In terms of your work, what do you think your teachers expect you to achieve? Open answer
11. Are your expectations the same as theirs? Open answer
12. What are the barriers, if any, to you achieving what you want to? Open answer.
13. Are these barriers fixed or alterable? Open answer or skip.
14. Would you be interested in discussing your views on this topic further, with a small group of other Year 9 students? (Yes/No/Depends)

Appendix C: Explanations of the aims of each question posed of respondents

Question	Rationale
Students were asked for their names and current attainment groupings.	These questions were written to create context for the questionnaire, and to help ascertain whether attainment groupings correlate to class climate and teacher and student expectations of achievement.
I enjoy schoolwork. (Yes/No/Sometimes with an option to explain the response).	This question is partially a warm-up question but also relates to the research questions, which means that it is trying to establish student perceptions of class climate and student satisfaction with their educational experience.
I find schoolwork too challenging. (Yes/No/Sometimes with an option to explain).	Similarly, this question relates to class climate. It aims to explore the second and third research question; whether students feel teachers try to create a culture of high expectation and if there are perceived barriers to this. In this case, the barrier would be inappropriate pitch disallowing students the opportunity to access lesson materials.
My teachers care about how much I learn. (Yes/No/Sometimes with an option to explain).	This question refers to class climate and is written to ascertain student perceptions of teacher support. It explores the first and second research question, as it is concerned with student perceptions of teacher expectations.
My teachers enjoy helping me learn. (Yes/No/Sometimes with an option to explain).	This question is similar to the previous one but focused more closely on cohesion in the classroom environment and on teacher and student relationships. It also allows for further exploration of the first and second research question.

Some students' work is better than others. (Yes/No/Sometimes with an option to explain)	This question relates to grouping and aims to explore students' perception of their expectation for their academic achievement. It is related to competitiveness in the classroom and is related to the second and third research question, which means that students may feel the practices of high-expectation teachers only apply to certain students. The question also explores learner identities, as do the subsequent two questions.
Only certain students can do well in school. (Yes/No/Sometimes with an option to explain)	Similarly, this question relates to grouping, and aims to explore students' perception of their expectation for their academic achievement, in addition to ways that teachers try to create a culture of high expectation. It is, therefore, related to the first and second research questions.
It makes students feel negatively about themselves when they don't do as well as others. (Yes/No/Sometimes with an option to explain).	This question, also related to grouping and to the third research question, wherein it aims to explore perceived barriers to creating a culture of high expectation. It is also related to competitiveness in the classroom environment.
My teachers explain how to improve my work. (Yes/No/Sometimes with an option to explain).	This question is related to goal setting and aims to explore the second research question. It corresponds to the third research question, as a failure to achieve goals can become a barrier to learning.
In terms of your work, what do you think your teachers expect you to achieve? Open answer.	This question relates to teachers' academic expectations of their students. It is written to explore students' responses to research questions one and two.
Are your expectations the same as theirs? Open answer	This question relates to student expectations of their own academic achievement and is also written to explore research questions one and two.
What are the barriers, if any, to you achieving what you want to?	This question relates specifically to the third research question and aims to

Open answer.	further explore student expectations of their own achievement.
Are these barriers fixed or alterable? Open answer or possibility to miss this question.	The final question is written to explore students' perceptions of possible barriers to their learning in greater detail, if barriers are relevant to them.

Appendix D Teacher questionnaire

1. Names and subject specialism?
2. I care about how much my students learn (Yes/No/Depends options with an option to explain response)
3. I enjoy helping students to learn (Yes/No/Depends options with an option to explain response)
4. Do you teach students in ability –groupings, either in sets or within the class? Open answer
5. How do you decide these groupings? Open answer
6. Is it easier for some students to succeed than others? Open answer
7. What do you feel are the positive and negative aspects of ability grouping? Open answer
8. How do you plan for students of differing abilities? Open answer
9. What is the role of feedback in helping students to improve? Open answer
10. What kinds of expectations for school success do your students have? Open answer
11. What kinds of expectations for school success do you have for your students? Is it the same as theirs? Open answer
12. Would you be interested in discussing your views on this topic further?

Appendix E Explanations of the aims of each question posed of respondents

Teachers were asked for the names and their subject specialisations.	These questions were written to create context for the questionnaire, and to help ascertain whether teachers' perceptions correlate to the specific subject areas.
I care about how much my students learn. (Yes/No/Depends with an option to explain)	This question refers to class climate and attempts to ascertain teacher perceptions of teacher support. It explores the first and second research question, as it is concerned with teacher perceptions of teacher expectations.
I enjoy helping students learn. (Yes/No/Depends with an option to explain)	This question is similar to the previous one but focused more closely on cohesion in the classroom environment, and on teacher and student relationships. It also allows for further exploration of the first and second research questions.
Do you teach students in ability groupings, either in sets or within the class? Open answer	Related to research questions one and two, this question is focused on classroom groupings and attempts to ascertain if there is a correlation between teachers' perceptions of teacher expectations, and whether they teach in attainment groupings or in mixed attainment groupings.
How do you decide these groupings? Open answer	Related to the same research questions, this question also aims to explore research question three and to consider whether misallocation to attainment groupings, or lack of fluidity within them could be potential barriers to creating a culture of high teacher expectations.
Is it easier for some students to succeed than others? Open answer	This question relates to grouping and aims to explore teachers' perception of students' expectation for their academic achievement. It is, therefore, related to the first and second research questions but also to the third research question as there is potential here to

	explore barriers to creating a culture of high teacher expectation.
What do you feel are the positive and negative aspects of ability grouping? Open answer.	This question is also related to grouping and aims to explore if quality of teaching is different for different groups. It also explores teacher expectations of students and is, therefore, related to the first and second research question.
How do you plan for students of differing abilities? Open answer.	Related to grouping, this question allows teachers to expand on their thoughts on the previous question. It is related to the second and third research questions, as it explicitly explores ways teachers try to create a culture of high expectation, and potential barriers to creating that culture.
What is the role of feedback in helping students to improve? Open answer	This question is related to goal setting and aims to explore the second research question. It also corresponds to the third research question, as failure to achieve goals can become a barrier to learning.
What kinds of expectations for school success do you have for your students? Is it the same as theirs? Open answer	This question relates to teacher expectations of students' academic achievement, in addition to teachers' perceptions of students' academic achievement, and is also written to explore research questions one and two.

Appendix F: Focus group topic guide

CORE THEMES	EXAMPLE QUESTIONS	ADAPTING
Introduction	*Description of the project*	Language used will be appropriate to the student's age and level of understanding.
Start by welcoming the students and thanking them for helping. Introduce myself and the project. Introduce some basic rules of the focus group.	This aim of this research is to explore teacher and student views of teacher expectations, and to explore possible ways of building a learning environment that helps all students to achieve their best.	Sufficient time will be allowed to develop a rapport with the group, and to respond to any questions, or make any clarifications.
Make it clear to students that they are free to end the discussion at any time.	It would be really helpful if you could tell me about your experiences in the classroom and the impact of these on your learning to help me understand the topic better. I will ask you some questions to help you with this, but please remember that there are no right or wrong answers.	
When conducting the focus group, it is important to be sensitive to the considerable diversity and inequalities in students' lives.		
Discuss ethics: consent, recording, confidentiality including limits of this, discuss anonymity and offer students choice of pseudonyms. Explain that the students do not have to talk about any issues they find difficult or upsetting. Invite the students to ask questions.	Introduce myself and offer students the opportunity to do the same. Explain ground rules. • Ensure students know only conversation is being recorded for us to transcribe and listen later. Only I will ever hear the recording, and none of their personal details will appear on the transcript. Remind students that	Note and adopt the language the students use to describe their experiences. Build confidence and trust. Ensure the ground rules are followed (listening, respect, equal contribution). Consider different strategies that allow the discussion to flow but also give a chance for quieter students to contribute (e.g., occasionally asking the
Remind students that participation in the research will not affect		

their relationships with me personally.	responses in which students are critical of individual teaching practices will not be revealed to staff.	students one after the other in a circle). Note when the students might be speaking from the perspective of norms and expectations, try to get beyond the socially desirable answers, continue monitoring. Be sensitive to inequalities that students might be facing – think in advance about what might make some students uncomfortable and continue monitoring during the discussion (e.g. conversations about academic grouping).
Theme 1: Grouping	15. Some students' work is better than others 16. Only certain students can do well in school 17. It makes students feel negatively about themselves when they don't do as well as others	Care will need to be taken that this discussion does not raise sensitive issues, particularly as the students will be drawn from a range of higher and lower previous attainers. Students might also feel reluctant or vulnerable to admit they do not know certain things or may not realise their own limitations.
Theme 2: Climate	1. I enjoy schoolwork 2. I find schoolwork too challenging 3. My teachers care about how much I learn 4. My teachers enjoy helping me learn	Care will need to be taken that this discussion does not raise sensitive issues, particularly as the students will be drawn from a range of higher and lower previous attainers.

		Students may need reminding not to name specific members of staff. Students could be encouraged to give concrete examples.
Theme 3: Goal setting	1. My teachers explain how to improve my work. 2. What do your teachers expect you to achieve? 3. Are your expectations the same as theirs? 4. What are the barriers, if any, to fulfilling your expectations? 5. Are these barriers fixed or movable (alterable)? Explain.	Care will be taken here, particularly when discussing barriers to achievement as this may potentially be sensitive.
<u>Close</u> the focus group Final opportunity to add anything, contact details, further support.	Sum up some points from the discussion, compliment and thank the students. Ask: is there anything you'd like to add? Anything important to you that we haven't talked about?	Talk to the students about how they felt during the interview and make sure they are not upset. Answer any questions the students might have. Acknowledge the students' contributions and make sure they know how the findings from the focus group will be used.

Appendix G: Teacher interview topic guide

Introduction

- *Thanks again for taking the time.*
- As you know, I am interested in understanding your views of teacher expectations.
- Building on from the online questionnaire, I will ask a few questions about things like grouping of students, the role of feedback and your expectations of students. I would like to get your views on what's important: I am not testing you – there are no right or wrong answers here
- Timing of interview (approximately 20 minutes).
- This is a voluntary process: you can withdraw at any time from the interview as a whole or you can choose not to answer particular questions.
- The conversation is being recorded for us to transcribe and listen to later. Only I will ever hear the recording, and none of your personal details will appear on the transcript.
- I will be writing up what I find to be published as a thesis and findings presented at conferences; again, nobody would be named in that. I may use extracts from what you say, but they will be anonymous. I am happy to send you a brief report of the project findings if you would like.
- Any questions? You can always get back in touch later if you think of anything.

Warm up question

Thanks for agreeing to be interviewed today. Can I first ask why you decided to agree to talk to me today?

Grouping questions

- Do you teach students in ability grouping either in sets or within the class?
- How do you decide these groupings?
- Is it easier for some students to succeed than others?
- What do you feel are the positive and negative aspects of ability grouping?
- How do you plan for students of differing abilities?

Class climate questions

- Would you say you care about how much your students learn?
- Do you enjoy helping students learn?
- In your opinion, what is the role of feedback in helping students to improve?

Expectation questions

- What kinds of expectations for school success do students have?
- Where do students' expectations about school success come from? What influences these?
- What kinds of expectations for school success do you have for your students? Is it the same as theirs?

- **Any other comments/questions? Anything important you think I've missed?**

- *Thank again*

Appendix H: Student participant information sheet

Thursday June 7th, 2018

To Year 9 students,

As well as working at xxxx as an xxxx teacher and xxxx, I am also a student at the University of West England in Bristol. As part of my studies, you are being invited to take part in a research project. The aim of this research is to understand student views of teacher expectations and ways of building a learning environment that helps all students to achieve their best.

Why am I being asked to take part?

All students in Year 9 are being invited to participate. You are completely free to decide whether or not you should partake. **If you do decide to participate, keep this information sheet, and sign and return the accompanying consent form to the email address below**. You are free to withdraw from the research until the end of the academic year. A decision to withdraw, or a decision not to partake, will not affect you or your studies in any way, and you will not feel excluded if you are not involved.

What does the research involve?

You will be invited to complete an online questionnaire, which will take approximately twenty minutes to complete. If you don't complete it, I will assume you no longer want to participate in the study, and your answers won't be used. The questionnaire will include an option to discuss the topic further with a small group of other Year 9 students. This discussion will last for approximately thirty minutes and any responses in which you are critical of what we do in school will not be revealed to staff.

Your responses will not impact on your studies in any way, nor on your relationships with the school, members of staff, or the researcher.

Anything else I need to know?

If sensitive information is disclosed during this process, suggesting that you are at risk or vulnerable in any way, it may need to be reported to relevant parties. While there will be no benefit to you personally in taking part, the findings of this research may be of benefit to future students.

Where will the information go?

All information which is collected about you which leaves the school will have your name replaced by a pseudonym and your background information categorised so you cannot be recognised from it. A random name generator will be used, and the pseudonym will be used throughout the research process. The findings will be published in a doctoral thesis and held in the library at University of West England, Bristol, and may also be published elsewhere. You may refer to the findings whenever you want to.

Any complaints about this process should be directed to xxx in the first instance.

I would be grateful for your completed consent form to be emailed back to me by Wednesday, June 13th.

Thank you for giving your attention to this, and if you agree, thank you for your participation!

xxxx

Appendix I: Student consent form

Please tick the appropriate boxes	**Yes**	**No**
Participating		
I have read and understood the project information sheet dated June 6th, 2018.	☐	☐
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	☐	☐
I agree to partake in the project. Partaking in the project may include being interviewed and recorded (audio or video).	☐	☐
I understand that my participation is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study until the end of the academic year and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to participate. You are completely free to decide whether or not to participate.	☐	☐
I understand that involvement-non-involvement in the research will not impact on my studies or any aspect of my professional life.	☐	☐
I understand that if I choose not to be involved, I will not feel excluded in any way.	☐	☐
Use of the information I provide for this project only		
I understand that my personal details will not be revealed to people outside the project as far as is possible. Names will be replaced by pseudonyms and background information will be categorised.	☐	☐
I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs.	☐	☐
Use of the information I provide beyond this project		
I agree for the data I provide to be archived at the UK Data Archive.	☐	☐
I understand that other authenticated researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	☐	☐
I understand that other authenticated researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they	☐	☐

agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.

To use the information you provide legally

I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials related to this project to xxx ☐ ☐

Appendix J: Parent and carer participant information sheet

Thursday, June 7th, 2018

Dear Year 9 parent or carer,

As well as working at xxx as an xxx and xxx, I am also a doctoral student at the University of West England in Bristol. As part of my studies, your child is being invited to take part in a research project. This aim of this research is to explore teacher and student views of teacher expectations and to explore possible ways of building a learning environment that helps all students achieve their best. The study will take place over the course of an academic year, beginning in June 2018.

Why is my child being asked to participate?

All students in Year 9 are being invited to participate. You and your child are completely free to decide whether or not they should participate. **If you do decide to participate, keep this information sheet, and sign and return the accompanying consent form to the email address below**. Your child is free to withdraw from the research until the end of the academic year without citing a reason. A decision to withdraw, or a decision not to partake in the study, will not affect them or their studies in any way, and your child will not feel excluded if they are not involved.

What does the research involve?

Your child will be invited to complete an online questionnaire, which will take approximately twenty minutes to complete. If they don't complete it, I will assume they no longer want to participate in the study, and their answers won't be used. The questionnaire will include an option to discuss the topic further with a small group of other Year 9 students. This discussion will last for approximately thirty minutes.

Responses to these questions will not impact on your child's studies in any way, nor their relationships with the school, teachers or the researcher.

Anything else I need to know?

If sensitive information is disclosed during this process, suggesting that your child is at risk or vulnerable in any way, it may need to be reported to relevant parties. While there will be no benefit to your child personally in participating, the findings of this research may be of benefit to future students.

Where will the information go?

All information that is collected about your child which leaves the school will have their name replaced by a pseudonym and their background information categorised so that they cannot be recognised from it. A random name generator will be used, and the pseudonym will be used throughout the research process. The findings will be published in a doctoral thesis and held in the library at University of West England, Bristol, and may also be published elsewhere. You may access the findings whenever you want to.

Any complaints about this process should be directed to xxx in the first instance.

I would be grateful for your completed consent form to be emailed back to me by Wednesday June 13th.

Thank you for giving your attention to this, and if you agree, thank you for your child's participation!

Appendix K: Parent and carer consent form

Please tick the appropriate boxes	**Yes**	**No**
Participating		
I have read and understood the project information sheet dated 6/6/18	☐	☐
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	☐	☐
I agree to my child participating in the project. Participating in the project may include being interviewed and recorded (audio or video).	☐	☐
I understand that partaking is voluntary; my child can withdraw from the study until the end of the academic year and does not have to give any reasons why they no longer want to participate. You and your child are completely free to decide whether or not to participate.	☐	☐
I understand that involvement/non-involvement in the research will not impact my child's studies or their relationship with the school, teachers and researcher.	☐	☐
I understand if my child chooses not to be involved, they will not feel excluded in any way.	☐	☐
Use of the information I provide for this project only		
I understand my child's personal details will not be revealed to people outside the project as far as is possible: names will be replaced by a pseudonym and background details will be categorised. A random name generator will be used, and a pseudonym will be used throughout the research process.	☐	☐
I understand that my child's words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs.	☐	☐
Use of the information I provide beyond this project		
I agree for the data provided to be archived at the UK Data Archive.	☐	☐
I understand that other authenticated researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	☐	☐
I understand that other authenticated researchers may use my child's words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs,	☐	☐

only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.

To use the information you provide legally

I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials related to this project to xxx	☐	☐

Appendix L: Teacher participant information sheet

As many of you know, as well as working at xxx, I am also a doctoral student at the University of West England in Bristol. As part of my studies, you are being invited to partake in a research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with other people if you want to. Please do not hesitate to ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like further information.

This aim of this research is to explore teacher and student views of teacher expectations and to explore possible ways of building an inclusive learning environment that helps all students to achieve their best. The study will take place over the course of an academic year, beginning in June 2018.

Why am I being asked to participate?

All members of staff are being invited to participate in both phases of the research.

You are completely free to decide whether or not to participate. If you do decide to participate, keep this information sheet, sign the consent form, and return it to me at the email address below. If you decide to participate, you are still free to withdraw until the end of the academic year without citing a reason. A decision to withdraw, or a decision not to participate, will not affect you in any way, nor your relationships with the school or the researcher.

If you do decide to partake in this study, you will be invited to complete an online questionnaire, which will take approximately twenty minutes to complete. If you don't complete it, I will assume you no longer want to participate in the study, and your answers won't be used. This questionnaire will include an option for you to discuss the topic further in an interview should you wish to. This will last for a similar duration.

Anything else I need to know?

If sensitive information is disclosed during this process, it may need to be reported to relevant parties. While there will be no benefit to you personally in participating in

the study, the findings of this research may benefit professionally and to future teachers and students.

Where will the information go?

All information that is collected about you which leaves the school will have your name replaced with a pseudonym and your background information categorised so that you cannot be recognised from it. A random name generator will be used, and the pseudonym will be used throughout the research process. The findings will be published in a doctoral thesis and held in the library at the University of West England, Bristol, and may also be published elsewhere. You may access the findings whenever you want to.

Any complaints about this process should be directed to xxx in the first instance.

I would be grateful for your completed consent form to be emailed back to me by Monday, June 11th, 2018.

Thank you for giving your attention to this, and if you agree, thank you for your participation!

Appendix M: Teacher consent form

Please tick the appropriate boxes	**Yes**	**No**
Participating		
I have read and understood the project information sheet dated June 4th, 2018.	☐	☐
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	☐	☐
I agree to participate in the project. Participating in the project may include being interviewed and recorded (audio or video).	☐	☐
I understand that my participation is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study until the end of the academic year and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to participate. You are completely free to decide whether or not to participate.	☐	☐
I understand that involvement or non-involvement in the research will not impact my studies or any aspect of my professional life.	☐	☐
In understand that if I choose not to be involved, I will not feel excluded in any way.	☐	☐
Use of the information I provide for this project only		
I understand that my personal details will not be revealed to people outside the project as far as is possible. Names will be replaced with pseudonyms and background information will be categorised.	☐	☐
I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs.	☐	☐
Use of the information I provide beyond this project		
I agree for the data I provide to be archived at the UK Data Archive.	☐	☐

I understand that other authenticated researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	☐	☐
I understand that other authenticated researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	☐	☐

To use the information you provide legally

I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials related to this project to xxx	☐	☐

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